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KONIX:

23
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56

The hardware... the software...

...THE TRUTH

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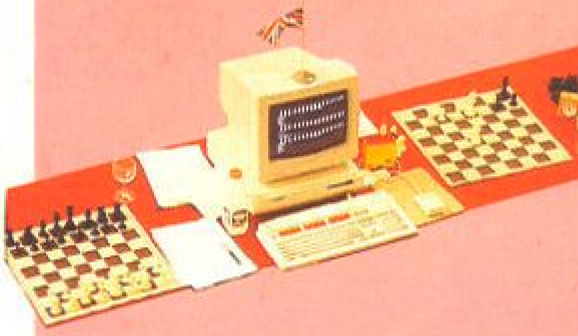
– with £600 of free lessons from Activision. Check out page 38.

TAKE OFF

...in *F15 II*: the most technically advanced flight sim we've seen on a home micro.

CRASH!



...if you're lucky, otherwise mankind might as well resign. Find out why inside...

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SPECIALS

KONIX: THE REVIEW 25

While industry giants Sega, Nintendo, and Atari wage bitter console war on each other, a small Welsh company has brought out a machine that could put all the others to shame. ACE gets its grubby paws on a full working system and tests both the hardware and the games that come with it...

ARCADEOLOGY 85

Ever wondered why *Donkey Kong* was called *Donkey Kong*, or what the bug was in the first version of *Breakout*? Julian Rignal comes up with the answers...

GAMES GET MEAN 30

Was that last game you bought just too hot to handle? Do you wimp out on the second planet in *Blood Money*? Andy Wilton checks out chess games that make mincemeat out of Grandmasters, and wonders whether the struggle between programmer and player is getting just a wee bit one-sided...

ARE YOU A WEIRDO? 101

Probably, but check out our exclusive character analyser to be absolutely certain...

MAKING IT 89

...money, that is. And music. MIDI enables some people to do both. Check out the ACE Ten Point Guide to MIDI Studio Professionalism...

ENTER CYBERSPACE!........105

ACE gets on the scent of a remarkable new development in graphics programming. Brave new worlds on the screen are nothing new, but soon you may actually be able to *enter them!*

SCREEN TEST

FOUR 900+ games this month, with a tremendous spread of gameplay ranging from high-flying simulation in F15II to frantic fun in Rick Dangerous. Or you might fancy a spell as an Egyptian god in Eye of Horus, or a quick game of Shufflepuck in the Restaurant at the End of the Universe (or somewhere like it). Remember, if it's here, it's hot...

ACE RATED

F15 STRIKE EAGLE II
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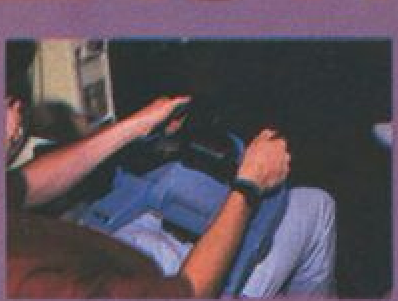
Can Konix beat the big boys? ACE checks out the prospects for Britain's console contender...

HERE AT LAST!

It's over a year since ACE reported on the Flare machine: a games micro that could make your dreams come true, with stunning sound and graphics potential.

Now the RISC-technology Flare machine is back with a vengeance as the core hardware design in Konix's new Multi-System Console. Combine Flare's potent powerhouse with Konix's flair for peripheral design and you have a machine that could revolutionise console games in this country...or will it? find out on pages 25-28.



TAKE TO THE

Activision reckon they have a winner in their latest release,

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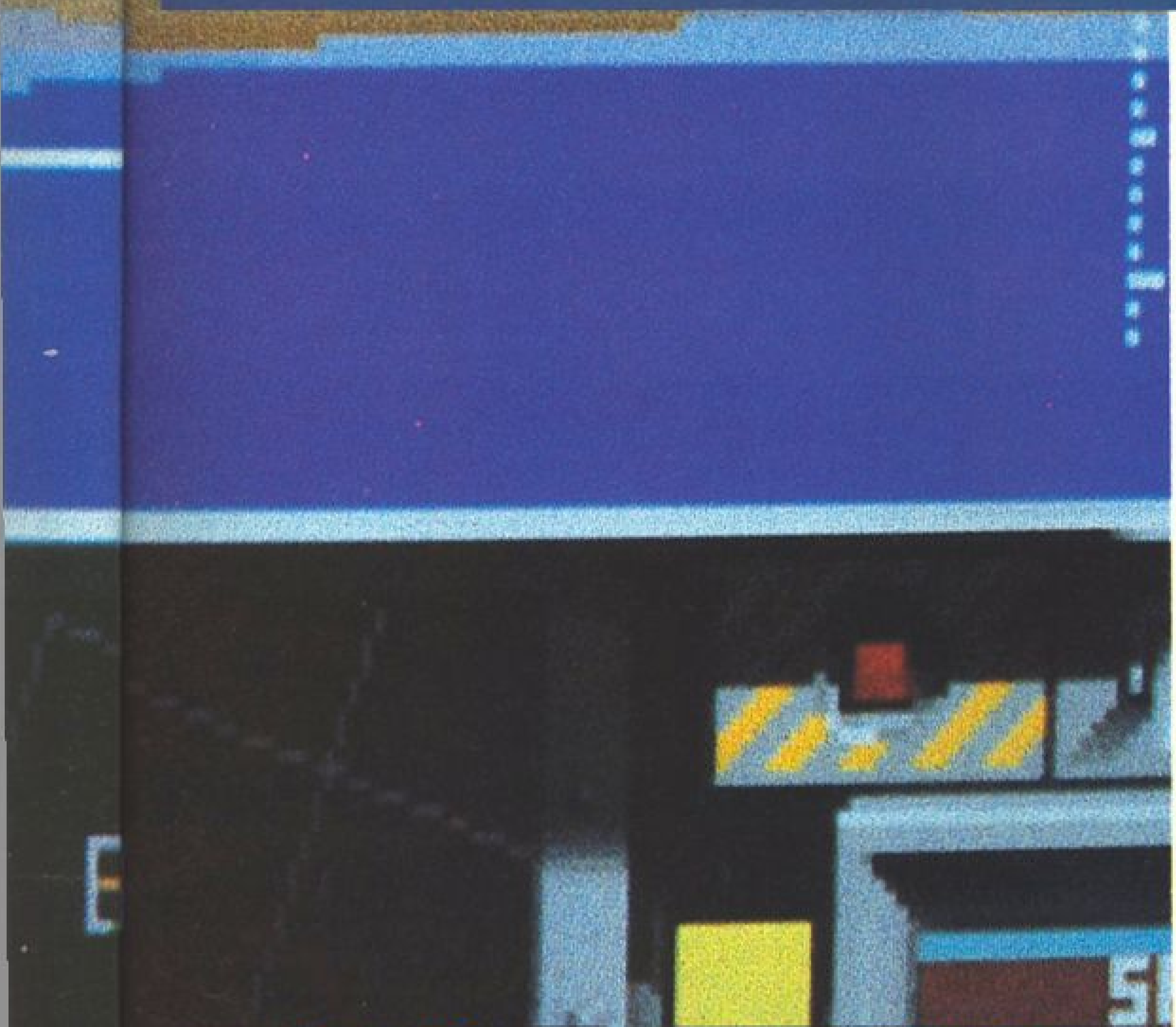
RULE BRITANNIA!

You may not realise it, but the games we play in Britain are often determined by the buying whims of people in America and Japan. In the old days, the Commodore 64 rose to power on a wave of imported US software, and now Nintendo threatens to swamp the world games market with Japanese Gameboys. Then along comes Konix with a world-beating BRITISH hardware design. And what happens? Do we give them a big hand? Do we ever?! On the contrary, a selection of gloom-mongers in the business go around saying what a wonderful machine it is out of one side of their mouth, and how it's bound to fail out of the other. Don't knock it – this machine is GOOD. Just keep your fingers crossed and Britain could soon be taking the trophy in the console wars.



XENON II – latest contender in the 'shoot-em-up of the year' category...

EYE OF HORUS – play god game in Ancient Egypt...

GAMEPLAY

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The latest releases tested rigorously by the ACE team, including *Xenon II* (hot to trot), *Eye of Horus* (Set in Egypt), and Psygnosis' *Beast* (...and bones). Plus *F15 Strike Eagle II*, king of the flight sims...for the moment.

ARCADE ACE 22
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Are you ALL wimps? Are games really too difficult? Is Gnorth really God? Do we really have to put up with this? And..oh yes...not menny typink errers.

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Sword of Aragon gets the ACE Treatment, and we report on the very promising *Hound of Shadow*, to be released this autumn – can it bring RPG into the mass market?

FREE ISSUE!............................36
MABEL: 'What was that noise at the front door, Arthur?'
ARTHUR: 'Er...Nothing, dear..' *(Sneaks off guiltily to collect free subscriber's copy of ACE, just popped through letterbox)*
MABEL: 'Arthur? Arthur???' *(There is no reply...)*

SKIES! FREE!

Bomber. We reckon you've got a winning chance of flying off with this £600 prize on P38.

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE . O

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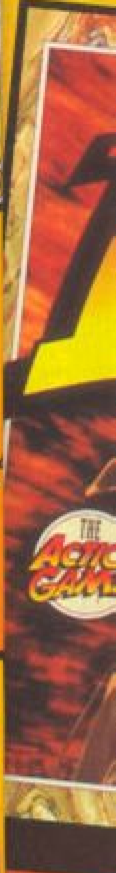

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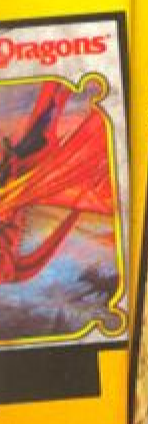

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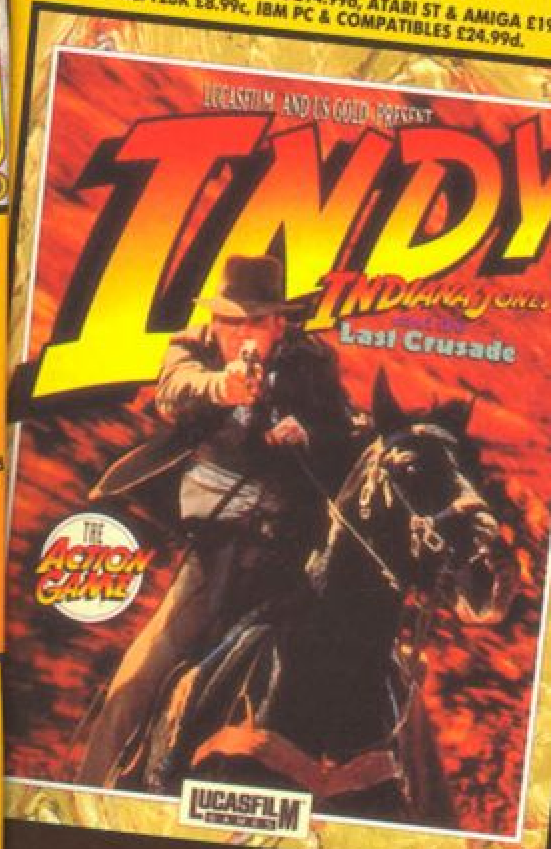

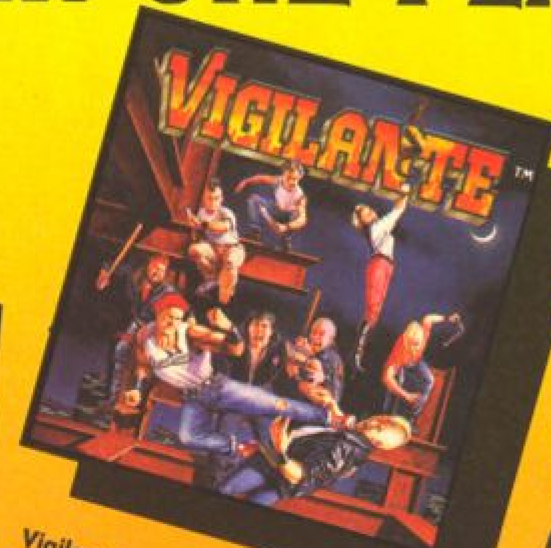

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The Model Shop 89a Woodbridge Road, Guildford. **Tel: 0483 39115**
Ultima White Lion Walk, Guildford. **Tel: 0483 506939**

TYNE & WEAR

Microbyte 56 Garden Walk, The Metro Centre, Gateshead. **Tel: 091 460 6054**
Microbyte The Green Market, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne & Wear. **Tel: 091 261 9050**
Sunderland Computer Centre 29 Crowtree Road, Sunderland. **Tel: 091 565 3711**
The Computer Shop 7 High Friars, Eldon Square, Newcastle. **Tel: 091 261 6260**
The Computer Shop 9 Maritime Terrace, Sunderland. **Tel: 091 310 8142**

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Allsorts 39 Cross Street, Abergavenny, Gwent. **Tel: (0873) 6903**
Bud Morgan 22/24 Castle Arcade, Cardiff **Tel: 0222 229065**
○ **E.C. Computers** Glamorgan House, David Street, Cardiff. **Tel: 0222 390286**

Tandy Pier Street, Aberystwyth, Dyfed. **Tel: 0970 625491**
Wrexham Computer Centre 24 Abbot Street, Wrexham, Clwyd LL11 1TA **Tel: 0978 358832**

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Bull Ring Computers 7 Waterloo Terrace, Bridgenorth. **Tel: 0746 766839**
Computer-Wize 394 Birmingham Road, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield. **Tel: 021 382 3252**
Comtazia 204 High Street, Dudley, West Midlands. **Tel: 0384 239259**
Comtazia Shopping Mall, Merryhill Shopping Centre, Brierley Hill. **Tel: 0384 261698**
Microbyte 424 Grand Parade, Bull Ring Centre, Birmingham. **Tel: 021 616 1036**
○ **Mr. Disk** 11 – 12 Three Shires, Oak Road, Bearwood, Warley. **Tel: 021 429 4996**
Mr. Disk 8 Smallbrook Queensway, City Centre, Birmingham B5 4EN **Tel: 021 616 1102**
Software City 1 Goodall Street, Walsall. **Tel: 0922 24821**
Software City 3 Lichfield Passage, Wolverhampton. **Tel: 0902 25304**
Venture TV Broad Street, Sidemoor, Bromsgrove. **Tel: 0527 72650**
○ **Virgin Games** 98 Corporation Street, Birmingham. **Tel: 021 236 1577**
Watchdog Comp 40 Queen Street, Wolverhampton. Tel: 0902 313600

WEST SUSSEX

Crawley Computers 62 The Boulevard, Crawley. **Tel: 0293 37842**
○ **Worthing Computers** 7 Warwick Street, Worthing. **Tel: 0903 210861**

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Atom Software 495 Great Horton Road, Great Horton, Bradford. **Tel: 0274 373788**
Microbyte 1 Kirkgate Mall, The Kirkgate Centre, Bradford. **Tel: 0274 308829**
Microbyte 34 County Arcade, Leeds. **Tel: 0532 450529**
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The Computer Store 34/36 Ivegate, Bradford. **Tel: 0274 732094**
The Computer Store 10 Square, The Woolshops, Halifax. **Tel: 0422 69077**
The Computer Store 4 Market Place, Huddersfield. **Tel: 0484 514405**
The Computer Store 40 Trinity Arcade, Bond Street Centre, Leeds. **Tel: 0532 429284**
The Computer Store 13 Westmoreland Street, Wakefield. **Tel: 0924 290139**
○ **Virgin Games** 94 Briggate, Leeds. **Tel: 0532 432606.**

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Antics 8 Regent Circus, Swindon. **Tel: 0793 611253**

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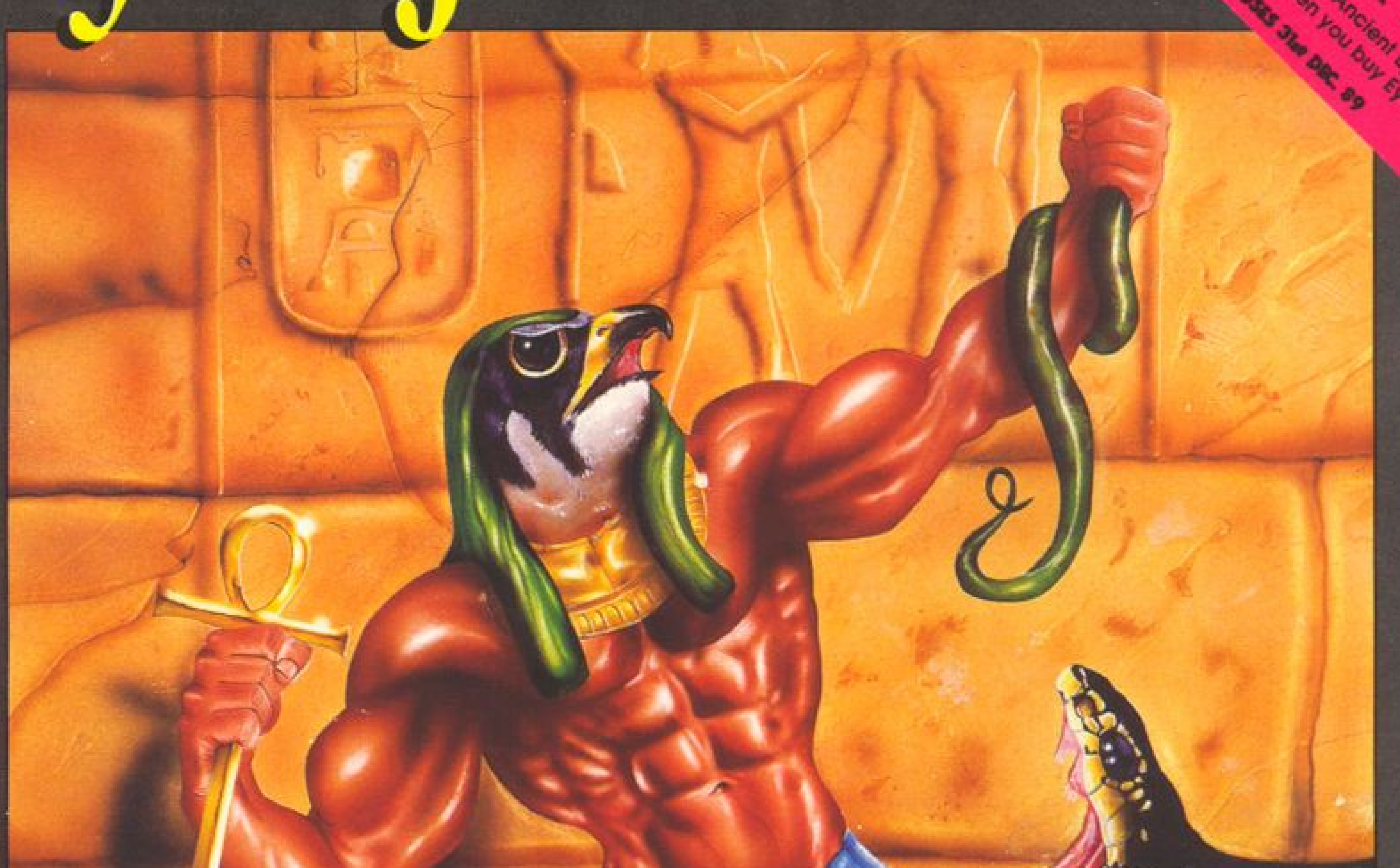

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Minimum age for entry 18

Atari ST Screen Shot

Atari ST Screen Shot

Atari ST Screen Shot

Walk Like An Egyptian.... Fly Like A Bird

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Eye of Horus synthesises adventure with frenetic arcade action- Adventure that is faithful to the Myth of Horus, as told in the Egyptian Book of the Dead –

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- 5 types of firepower
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MASTERWORKS FOR THE MILLENIUM

LOGOTRON

Logotron, Chancery House, 107 St. Pauls Road, Islington, London. N1 2NA

- Atari's portable – at last.
- Whopping great big Amiga
- PC Show preview
- Saucy snippets

ACE NEWS

ATARI UNWRAP STACY

According to sources close to Atari, several new ST-compatible machines are to be launched at the World's largest Atari show in Dusseldorf, Germany.

The machine most likely to appear is the long-awaited Stacy, a portable version of the ST.

Several setbacks have caused the machine's release date to be postponed - the latest delay being due to the lengthy process of blowing TOS 1.4 (the new operating system) onto ROM.

Four versions of the luggable are planned. The basic model will come with an 8Mhz 68000 processor (identically rated to the current ST processor), 256K ROM, 1 Mbyte of main memory, 32 of static RAM for the screen, Supertwist monochrome LCD screen (with optional backlighting), 3.5-inch double sided floppy drive, trackerball and two mouse buttons on the keyboard. The liquid crystal display will have a resolution of 640 by 400 - the same as the Atari SM124 monochrome screen.

Other models in the Stacy range will come with various configurations of drive and memory.

All standard ST ports are present on Stacy: monitor socket serial, MIDI, parallel, floppy, hard disk, RS232, cartridge.

The basic Stacy is expected to start around £1000.

Atari's 68030 workstation is also expected to be displayed at the show. The TT, standing for thirty-two thirty-two, is claimed to support the Unix, ST TOS and MS-DOS operating systems. The TT is likely to come in a tower system and be priced around £2500.

ST games players have long been waiting for Arari to produce a machine capable of giving the Amiga a run for its money. It seems Atari has taken note and is to launch an expanded ST at Dusseldorf. The notion of a super ST is nothing new, but it seems things are really happening with many major software houses in the country having received development machines. Atari is planning to quietly introduce the enhanced ST, or STE, in place of the existing 520 in the Powerpack bundle later this year.

Details on the new machine are sketchy, but sources have revealed the following:

-4096-colour palette with identical resolutions and on-screen colours to the existing ST.

-Two-channel stereo 8-bit DMA sound chip as well as the existing ST Yamaha sound chip

-Extremely rapid multi-directional hardware scrolling.

In all other aspects the STE will be identical to the ST. A double sided floppy will be provided as standard and the processor will be the same 8Mhz-rated 68000 affair that graces all current STs, Because the STE will contain the same hardware (along with a few extras) as the ST, all existing ST programs should run on it.

Next month's ACE will carry a full report of the new Atari machines shown at Dusseldorf.

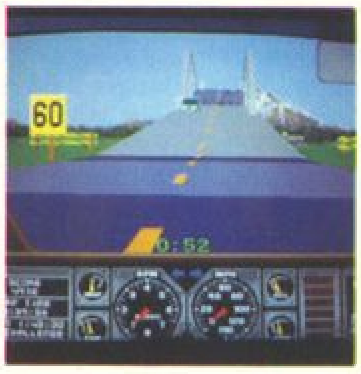
ELECTRONICA '89

New Agers and computer music and graphics freaks take note: the Electronica '89 show takes place on September 23rd in London's Logan Hall. A battery of synths and computers will be producing all sorts of far out music, while banks of Amigas and a Fairlight Computer Video instrument are among the visual attractions. If you want tickets or further details, contact AMP Records on 01-885 5665 during office hours.

BABY ARCHIE GETS GAMES

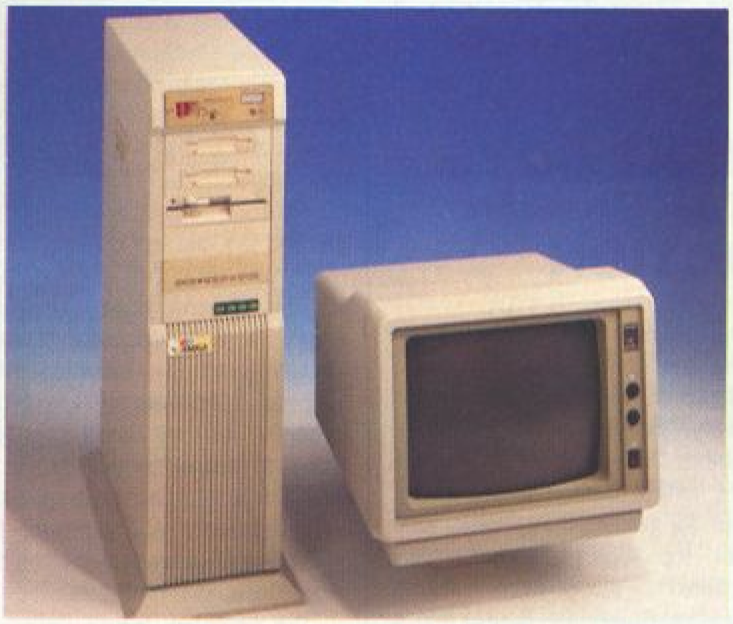
Acorn's cut-down Archimedes, the A3000, looks as though it's going to get the games support that its bigger brother missed out on. Representatives from 30 games software houses recently attended a conference organised at Acorn, where the bigwigs outlined a marketing strategy (more than the Archie ever had) and revealed details of the developers' package for the machine.

As far as Acorn and the A3000-buying public are concerned, the whole thing seems to have been a success; no less a luminary than Ocean's Gary Bracey said afterwards 'It's a lovely machine and I'm sure we will be doing something for it. From what I have seen and learned today the A3000 deserves only our highest profile titles such as *Batman* and *The Untouchables*.' Other software houses aired similarly enthusiastic opinions and one, Domark, already have two games under development – *Trivial Pursuits* and *Hard Drivin'*, due to be previewed at the PCW Show.



***Hard Drivin'* – soon to appear on the A3000**

WORLD'S LARGEST AMIGA?



It's not just the Yanks and the Japs who produce exotic equipment. Our Danish correspondent, Kenneth Bernholm, has turned up the WORLD'S LARGEST AMIGA over in the land of the Viking. The Tower Amiga lets you build your own system in a fancy stand-on-its-side cabinet. All the switches are on the front of the box, making it nice and simple to reach and use. Inside, you've got your standard Amiga 2000 – but there's also room for all sorts of extras, like hard disks, PC emulator boards, genlock, extra RAM, MIDI equipment and heaven knows what else. And the cost? Not as bad as you might think. For around £500 Eurotrade of Arhus will stick your Amiga inside the box and set everything up. Eurotrade can be found at Finlandsgade 25, DK-8200 Arhus N, Denmark. Tel. 86166111

This competition is not open to employees or business associates of Logotron or Mirrorsoft or their families
Minimum age for entry 18

SKYWARE!

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Tediously boring plane flights could take on a whole new dimension next year if Plessey's new Integrated Flight and Entertainment Services System (IFESS) becomes reality. IFESS will allow you to play computer games, use video and audio channels and access tele-banking and shopping services - all from the (minimal) comfort of your plane seat. The system comprises a colour LCD display, headset and keyboard, linked to the aircraft's satellite system for global communications. IFESS was shown at this year's Paris Air Show, and has attracted interest from over 40 airlines. Of course, for the ultimate gaming experience you might like to hook your game of *Falcon* into the real aircraft's control mechanisms...

IT'S MAGIC

The guys at Liverpool's Digital Magic Software are busy performing magic tricks. Jules Burt, DMS company boss, explained: "I've been doing magic tricks since the age of six and got John Law (another DMS person) interested soon ofter I meet him".

When we asked what tricks DMS get up to, Jules replied, "Nothing too big like involving stage props, just slight of hand close-up stuff with cards and coins in the pub". It certainly looks like we have the beginnings of a games industry circus, it there are any other acts out there please get in touch...

RENT BOYS TAKE ACTION

You can now rent Action Screenplay, the computer games video magazine, from your local video library. Screenplay's latest issue, number three, is a 90 minute feature length edition incorporating over 35 games, 2 interviews (one with top US games company Activision, the other with music maestro Bomb the Bass), and a new section, Playback, which relives classic games of bygone days. If you prefer you can still buy the video from your local software dealer.

Hotshot MD Jon Beales

PIRACY KILLS...

Mungo Amyatt-Leir, managing director of bankrupt games software company Software Horizons, has placed the blame for his companies recent demise firmly on the shoulders of software pirates and their illegal practices.

Amyatt-Leir told ACE, 'Obviously we were under-capitalised but PIRACY PUT US UNDER. Take one of our ST games as an example: *Dragonscape* sold only 2000 copies worldwide, out of a potential market of over a million ST's. That's a pretty poor showing'. On the whole situation he commented, "I feel really pissed off, piracy has got a lot worse over the last few years and shows no signs of stopping".

Software Horizons was set up by the 23 old entrepreneur last year, and produced such games as the aforementioned *Dragonscape* (a multi-directional blaster) and *Veteran* (a Operation Wolf inspired shoot'em-up). More recently Horizons tuned its attentions to more serious products with the Mastersound sound sampling hardware and software for the ST and virus protection software, Sleepsafe on the PC.

The company leaves debts of over £370,000 with Amyatt-Leir personally losing "a substantial amount of money". He laments, "It's a very messy business but I will be staying in the computer games industry".

Meanwhile news reaches us from Denmark, scene of previous ACE investigations into international piracy, that moves by the police are doing nothing to help the situation.

SNIPPETS

Leading software games company, US Gold has put the price of its £14.99 16-bit games back up to £19.95, because of a lack of response from the games buying public. Gold originally had plans to release *Vigilante*, the IREM beat'em-up, for £15, but has upped its price by £5.

Meanwhile, Prism Leisure is re-releasing around 60 16-bit games for the rock bottom price of £5.99. Among the titles due for price slashing are Addictive's *Football Manager* (ST,PC), *Hotshot* by Satory (ST, Amiga, PC) and Anco's *Thai Boxing* (ST,Amiga).

Interphase, the eagerly awaited *Mercenary*-type game from Imageworks, is finally going to make it onto ST and Amiga in October, with a PC version to follow at Christmas.

Have you seen *Die Hard*, the great Bruce Willis all-action movie, on video yet? If you enjoyed the film, you'll be pleased to know Activision is releasing a *Die Hard* computer game on all major formats this Christmas.

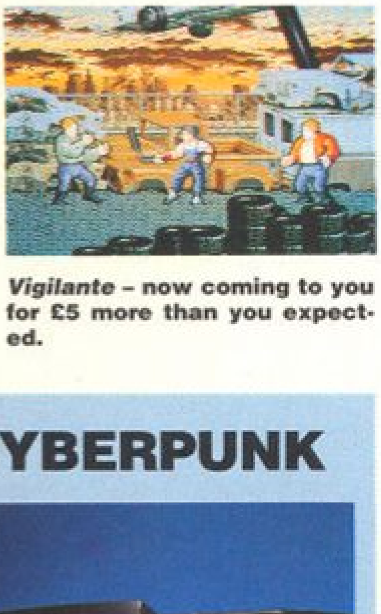
Activision also has the licence to the new James (*Terminator, Aliens*) Cameron film, *The Abyss*. No details of the games at the moment though.

Kevin Toms, author of the immensely popular *Football Manager* footie-sim is just putting the finishing touches to *World Cup Football Manager*, just in time for the World Cup next year.

Microprose really cares about you gamesters: they've just spent another £2500 on their new racing-sim, *Stunt Car Racer*, just to improve the games presentation and graphics.

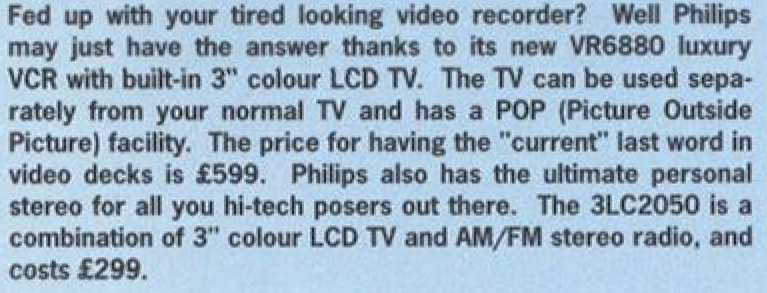
A staggering 9.1 million *Super Mario Brothers* Nintendo games packs have been sold in the US alone. How soon before the game is in every single American household? And how soon before Nintendo decide tio deluge we Brits with that little old Famicom?

Meanwhile a number of industry observers are favouring the monochrome Nintendo Gameboy over the colour Atari Lynx, simply because of Nintendo's power in the market place...



***Vigilante* – now coming to you for £5 more than you expected.**

PHILIPS GO CYBERPUNK



Fed up with your tired looking video recorder? Well Philips may just have the answer thanks to its new VR6880 luxury VCR with built-in 3" colour LCD TV. The TV can be used separately from your normal TV and has a POP (Picture Outside Picture) facility. The price for having the "current" last word in video decks is £599. Philips also has the ultimate personal stereo for all you hi-tech posers out there. The 3LC2050 is a combination of 3" colour LCD TV and AM/FM stereo radio, and costs £299.

THE ACE PC SHOW GUIDE

(Everything you wanted to know...but couldn't be bothered to ask)

Many of the computer games companies won't even be exhibiting at this year's show, and fewer still will actually allow you to see their wares publicly. But never fear, just read our definitive guide to what's not there, who's not there, and how to get where *you're* not wanted...

50 THINGS YOU WON'T SEE AT THE PC SHOW

(Entries correct at time of writing)

- Anybody on ACE **buying a drink**
- All Electronic Arts new games, ***Aggressor*** (Jez San's new flight-sim touted by many as the successor to EA's superlative Interceptor, ***Magic Fly*** (an original game by the authors of the brilient ST art package, *Flair Paint*), **the new Bullfrog game** (another game from the team that gave us *Populous*, need we say more?), ***Ferrari Formula One*** (on the Spectrum, C64, CPC, ST and PC) and ***Dragon Wars*** (the latest creation from Interplay, the guys behind *The Bard's Tale series, Battle Chess and Neuromancer)*.
- Any Codemasters games. We'll leave it up to you to decide whether this is a good or bad thing.
- Anco has decided to forgo the hassle and bustle of the PC Show because 'it's a waste of bloody money and you don't meet anybody new'. Among the Anco selection you'll miss will be ***Kick Off*** (Spectrum and CPC versions). ***Player Manager*** (the follow up to *Kick Off*), ***Kick Off Expansion Kit*** (you can never have too much of a good thing) and ***Rally Cross*** (makes a change from football).
- Digital Magic Software's two new releases, ***Drivin'Force*** (multi-vehicle race-sim) and a multi-directional scrolling helicopter shoot'em-up.
- Perhaps thankfully, you won't see a lot of Emlyn Hughes, 'cause Audiogenic will only demonstrate ***Emlyn Hughes International Soccer*** (ST and Amiga), ***Emlyn Hughes Arcade Trivia Quiz*** (no comment), ***Lone Wolf*** (looks like you'll have to stick to the fantasy novels) and ***Helterskelter*** (on the PC), to a select few at a nearby hotel.
- ***AMOS***, the Amiga version of Mandarin Software's popular ST games creating BASIC, *STOS*.
- An extensive rage of Microprose titles including ***Rainbow Islands*** (coin-op manufacturer Taito, masterly follow up to *Bubble Bobble*), ***Stunt Car Racer*** (the latest game from Geoff Crammond, the programming genius behind *Sentinel* and of course *Revs*), ***UMS II*** (the one all ST, Amiga and PC computer wargamers have been waiting for), ***Starlord*** (Maelstroms's answer to *Elite*, with even more trading and action. Interestingly enough *Starlord* started life as a Play by Mail game run by Maelstrom's boss, Mike Singleton), ***Starglider II***(PC), ***Weird Dreams*** (C64, Amiga and PC), ***F-19 Stealth Fighter*** (Amiga), ***Tank*** (IBM), ***Red Storm Rising*** (ST), ***MidWinter, Survivor, Rat Pack, Epoch, P-47***, etc. Oh yes, and you won't see anybody from Microprose either...
- Many marvellous Mirrorsoft's games such as ***It Came From The Desert, Interphase, Chaos Strikes Back, Crime Town Depths, Terrium, Palladin, DDT, Vette!***, plus six new releases (three of them "really major")...all these will be absent, along with the rest of the Mirrorsoft team.
- Software Horizons, Computer Gamesweek and The Bug (they've all disappeared since last year's show).
- Jane Smith belly dancing (Logotron are at a hotel just round the corner from Earls Court).

This year's classiest promotional stunt has got to be the amazingly mobile abdomen of Jane Smith, brought to you courtesy of Logotron, but you'll have to get past hotel security to see her...

10 THINGS YOU *CAN* SEE AT THE SHOW...

- ACE (that goes without saying!).
- Ocean's ***Batman*** (hype springs eternal, and you might get a Batman sticker, poster, badge or even the computer game).
- Bar (that's where everybody is most of the time).
- Domark (the Twits always come up with a new hairbrained scheme every year, remember last year's London double decker bus, or indeed Jeff Archer the year before?).
- CRL (to pick up the newest Virus Busting program for your PC, ST or Amiga).
- Virgin/Mastertronic (the latest in budget, full-price, coin-ops and Sega Carts).
- Infogrames' ***Drakken***, (one of the best role-playing games released this year) will be there.
- US Gold (check-out the Michael Jackson impersonator).
- Ocean (it's always worth a second look).
- Jane Smith belly dancing (If you can get by the hotel security!).

THE PERSONAL COMPUTER SHOW
27 SEPTEMBER – 1 OCTOBER 1989
EARLS COURT LONDON

SHOW DETAILS

The PC Show is being held at Earls Court, London from 27th September to 1st October between 10am and 6.30pm (5pm on Sunday). Remember the first three days are reserved for business and trade visitors over the age of 18. More details from show organisers, Montbuild on **0203 464004**.

THREE GAMES THAT STILL HAVEN'T MADE IT FROM LAST YEAR'S PC SHOW

1. ***Damocles*** (Novagen's follow up to *Mercenary* must have broken all records...it's being launched at the PC Show for the third year in a row).
2. ***Ramrod*** – Gremlin's surreal epic featuring miniature coin-op machines, Pepsi cans and CD's was first mentioned in ACE Issue One.
3. ***Interphase***, Imagework's solid 3D arcade adventure – formerly *Mainframe*.
4. An honorary mention must go to FTL/Mirrorsoft's ***Dungeon Master*** expansion kit, ***Chaos Strikes Back***.

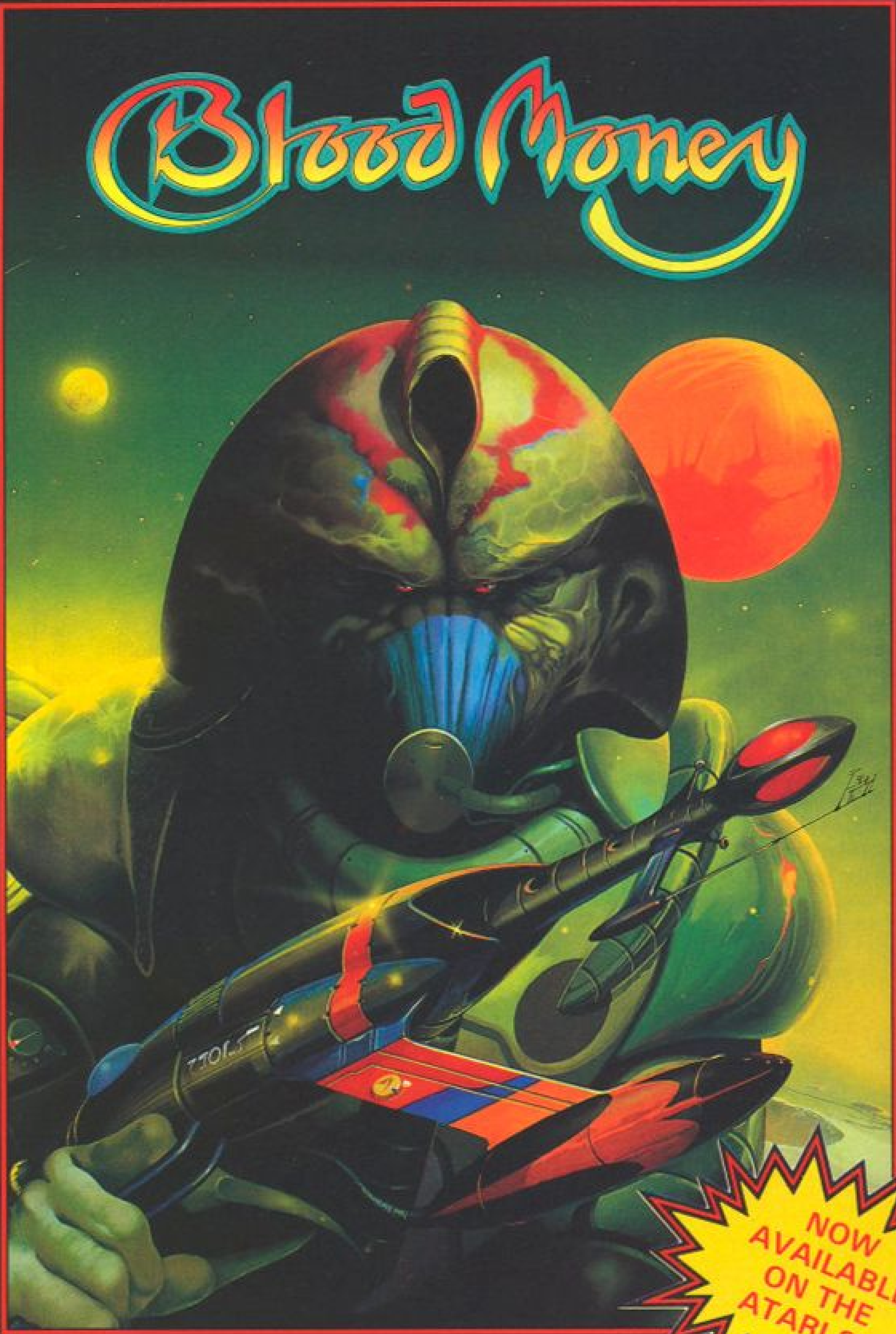
THREE WAYS TO GET IN (WHERE YOU'RE NOT WANTED)

So, you've set your heart on attending that all-important press launch (lunch), here's a few way's you can go about it...

1. Pretend you're a freelance journalist. You'll need: acne, glasses, mini-cassette recorder, notebook, an extremely boring personality.

2 Pose as Jez Bitmap, creator of *Xenon Glider III*. You'll need: acne, glasses, rucksack, anorak, hexbinary calculator, and a fluent line in hacking bullshit, '16 million colours on screen out of a palette of 2, every pixel a sprite, simultaneous scrolling in 27 directions...'

3. Pose as the Editor of ACE. You'll need glasses, notebook, bald head, harrassed appearance, and a copy of last month's letters pages.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GAMES MACHINE — 'STAR PLAYER' 90%
Irridescent, irrepressible and utterly playable. In one player mode it's great, in two it's incredible fun."

ZZAP—'SIZZLER' 94%
"Blood Money ranks as an all time Zzap Office favourite."

ST FORMAT GOLD

AMIGA FORMAT—'FORMAT GOLD' 92%
"This game is so visually brilliant and possesses those classic addictive qualities, that once you've picked up your joystick you just won't want to put it back down again."

SMASH MAGAZINE—'GOLD MEDAL AWARD'
"Graphics 10 Sound 10 Motivation 10 Value 10 - A perfect score!"

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Saint & Greavsie

The Ultimate Soccer Trivia Game

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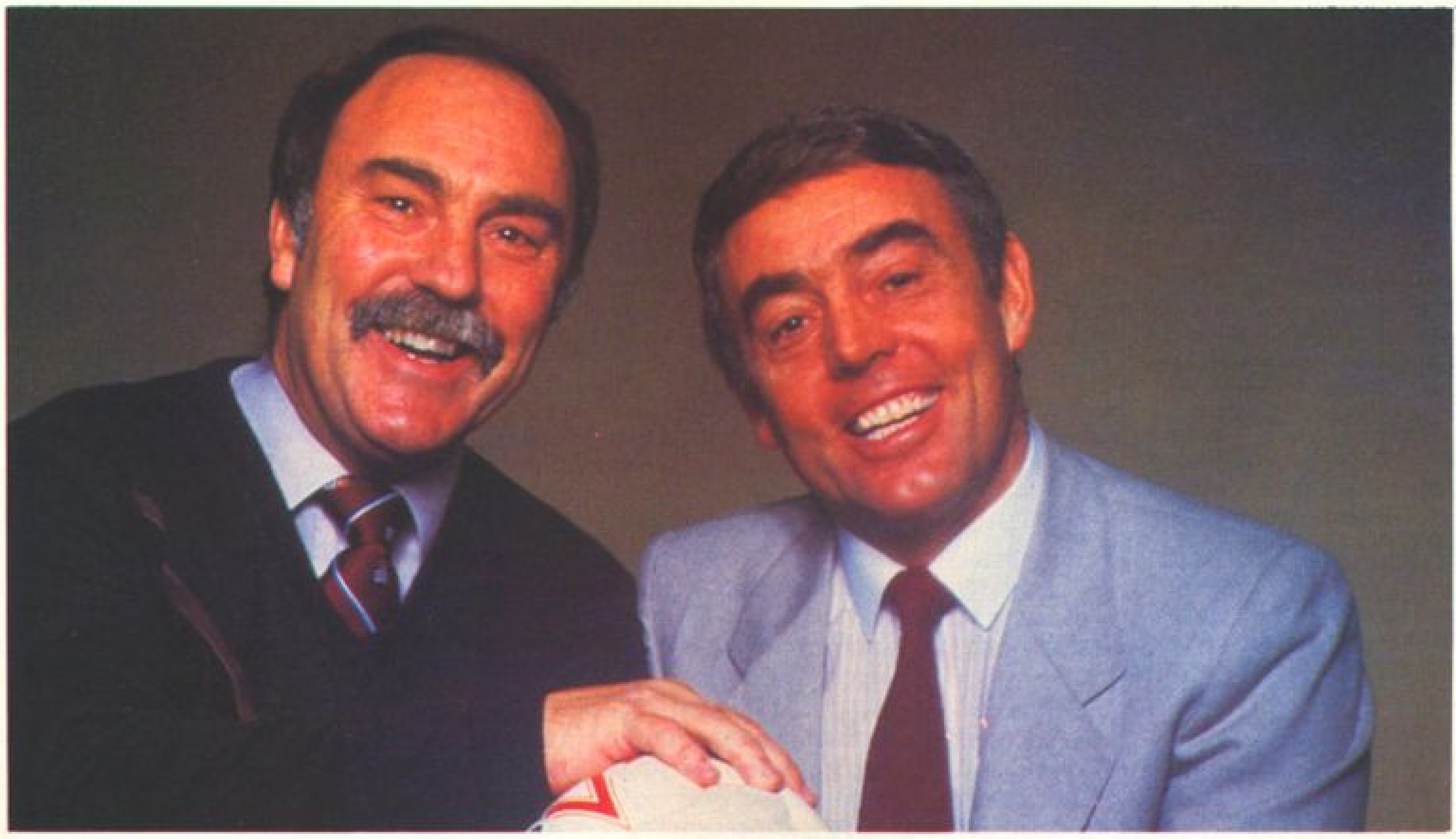

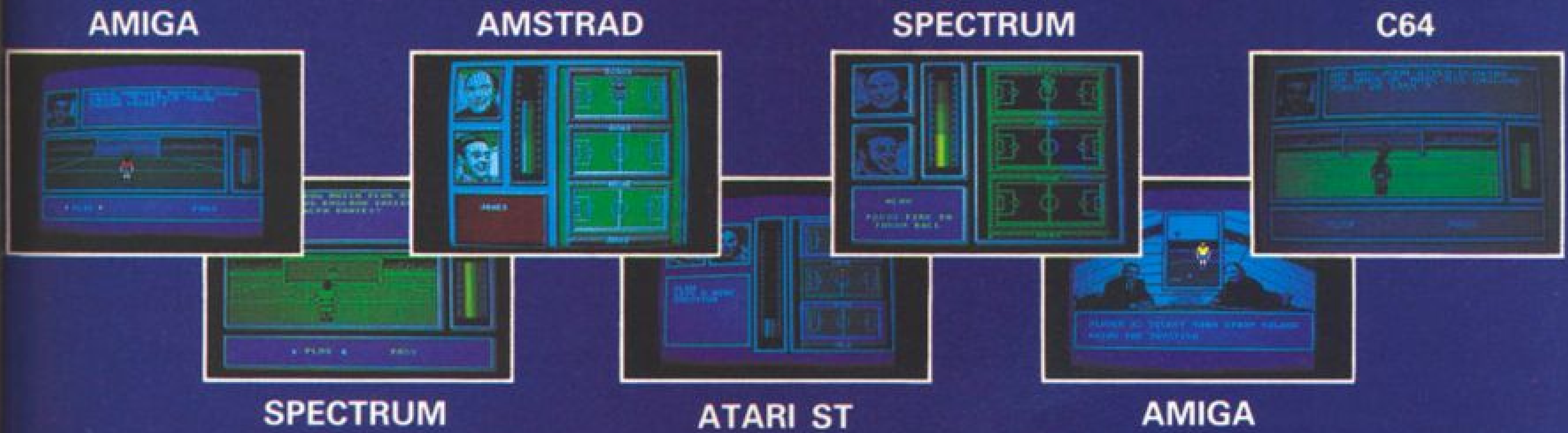

Saint + Greavsie is a 1-4 player soccer Trivia game based on the board game endorsed by Ian St. John and Jimmy Greaves. With a choice from 3 categories - HOME, AWAY or DERBY, each with a varying degree of difficulty and with over 2000 questions to answer, this is your chance to test your knowledge of football. Choose a player and a team to represent you and he will be shown taking a penalty when a question is being answered. The outcome of which will depend on whether your answer is correct or not! With excellent graphics and music and with digitised pictures on the 16 bit machines, this is a trivia game suited to anyone with an interest in football. A must for all football and trivia fans. As Jimmy Greaves says "It's a funny ol' game".

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ACE LETTERS

THREE PAGES OF LETTERS THIS MONTH – AND EVERY MONT FROM NOW ON (SPACE ALLOWING). AND WHAT'S MORE – NOT A SINGLE TYPOGRAPHICAL ERROR! FOR MORE NEWS OF LAST MONTH'S DISASTROUS PRODUCTION ERROR, SEE THE PANEL OPPOSITE....

CABLE GAMES

I am writing in reply to the letter about linking two ST's together with a serial cable or a 'datalink' cable. I made a 2 metre long datalink cable after buying *Powerdrome*.

My friend brought his ST round and we had a game of *Powerdrome* against each other.

Then *Populous* was released which also supported datalinking. We decided to make a huge datalink cable to go between our houses (we live next door to each other!).

We bought a 30 metre rotary cable from Tandy's and connected plugs to it. It worked very well and is still working now. We also played *Falcon* with this cable!

Level 122 of *Populous* is called VERYQUEER and is almost impossible!

Why did the ACE CARD competition stop? I got an ACE CARD about 6 months ago and the competition only lasted about another 2 months.

I have never won any competition and I hoped I would win something in the ACE CARD competition, but it finished before I even got a chance.

J P Boggis, Suffolk

Interesting to hear about your datalinking – has anyone else tried this? Write and tell us. As for the ACE Card, this scheme was started – and stopped – by the magazine's previous publishers. The good news is that we are currently setting up a replacement scheme to run in the magazine in the very near future. It'll be different, and a lot more interesting than the Card, so stay tuned.

ON MATTERS OF DESIGN

I am writing for your advice on a small matter, which shouldn't be too much hassle for you to reply on. I've thought of what I consider a very good game idea, which is definitely an original. I'm contacting you with the hope that you'll tell me where the best place to send it off to is. 'Best ' meaning a place where they do a good job and pay reasonable rates. Although tons of money is not essential as I would be very happy just to see my idea marketed, I consider money an extra-one which I can always use! Anyway, I hope you can aid me and please keep up the standard of ACE (no skimping on pages please).

Seth Cheeseman, Gwynedd

Selling game ideas isn't easy because you have to develop a relationship of trust with a software producer so that when you tell him about your multi-million dollar wheeze he doesn't fob you off with a pint and publish it anyway...

Best way to do this is to team up with a programmer whose work has already been published and who already has good connections. Failing that, the only way to go is the usual letter, phone call, meeting route – fraught with delays, pitfalls, and disappointment.

O.K, I appreciate that you can only print so many letters in each issue of ACE but I must admit I was really peeved when I saw that my recent letter on game designing had been overlooked, or had it?

I refer to a letter I wrote to you concerning the articles 'GAME DESIGN' by Jan Riglar in the June and July issues of ACE.

To refresh your memory I am a game designer, but unfortunately I have no contact in the software industry and therefore I have had great difficulty obtaining any interest what so ever in my design from any of the software houses.

The articles were full of good advice for up and coming game designers, but I'm just wondering whether it was a case of killing up space in your magazine and maybe you thought that no one would be that bothered about it.

I am bothered about game designing, and I'm pretty sure that other people such as myself are concerned that the software industry is not taking a damn bit of notice of us. It looks like the magazines aren't taking any notice either, maybe they are on the same payroll and don't fancy the idea of giving out another slice to any one else.

Could it be that all my letters are getting lost in the post, maybe its a conspiracy against me, a black list, or maybe I have to join a club or something. Whatever the case may be, one thing's for sure; whilst there are software houses and computer magazines around that are too ignorant to be polite enough to acknowledge or answer a letter, the computer entertainment industry is going to be the loser in the long run. I, for one, will not buy any more games from software houses that do not have the decency to reply to my letters, and that list is getting longer every day.

By my reckoning I'll have to sell my three computers before the end of the year! What a shame! What a waste!

R Barren, Nottingham

ACE has just moved offices (again) and there has been some trouble with mail. Rest assured everyone that mail is now being delivered regularly and things are getting back to normal.

As anyone in business will know, getting replies out of people requires either: (a) that you have something they are desperate for or (b) instruments of torture. Try the London Dungeon for some examples of the latter. This should give you some idea of how to proceed.

If you want to sell your computers, don't forget the ACE Readers Pages, eh?

SHOWBUSINESS

Could you please tell me where and when the next Commodore computer show is because I have just got an Amiga and I want to know more about all the games and stuff, so please tell me. Oh!, and could you make sure it's in Britain!

Mark Kelly, Onley

Next Commodore Show is on Oct 17th – 19th at the Novotel in West London. Call 0625 879970 for more details. You can also check out the ACE Diary section in the Pink Pages...

WEIRD

I, the supreme King of Gods am writing to tell you labourers how angry I am with those minor beggers down there, with their silly little idiosyncrasies. These preposterous mites happen to be the pamper programmers of *Operation War*. I am sick to death of the tedious multiloads in between the levels on my little toy Amstrad CPC 464. I demand you to give me some of your petty cheap advice. Will £1m be O.K? I am sure you are the cheapest around!

The King of Gods

Get a disk drive – and send your cheque to the editor, marked 'Private and Confidential'.

WEIRDER

Don't you listen to Gnorth? Every god knows that the resident of No.1 Nether Realm, Milton Keynes is the hereditary Janitor of Olympus. Pah! The only time Gnorth messes around with volcanoes is when he cleans them out! By the way, the squashed bug on this letter is actually Gnorth (I punished him for refusing to polish a tile in my bathroom).

And if you lot out there don't write to me, I'll use my godly powers to flood you with forms to fill in. Or I might borrow Sludge Vohaul's door-to-door salesman.

Soon I'll send in the details of Jupiters cabinet reshuffle. Apparently, Poseidon's getting seasick and Hermes hates his silly winged hat.

Psyne Ear, (Sign here)
God of Bureaucracy
Heavenly Customs Dept,
PO Box 666
Olympus

£200 BLOWOUT

I currently own an Atari ST which is fine for my word processing and music making, but I feel I need to expand more on my games playing and I therefore wish to buy a console, PC Engine or Sega Megadrive. I hear both are very new and are fast machines in terms of speed of scrolling and animation.

I have a budget of £200 to spend and cannot decide which one to choose, so as you have obviously play tested them could you tell me which is the best and which one has more value for money and future prospects?

P C Smith, Gloucester

You say you want to buy a 'console, PC Engine, or Sega Megadrive', but most people would consider these consoles. None of these models are currently officially available in the UK, but Virgin's current strong support of the 8-bit Sega and their statement of intentions about the 16-bit Megadrive might be an indicator of future trends. In ACE 23 Nick Alexander of Virgin was quoted as saying that we might expect deliveries early next year.What about a Konix?

32 BIT BETTER?

Up until a few weeks ago, I had almost decided on which console to buy, the Sega Mega drive or the Konix Multi System or Nintendo 16 bit (I was planning to see the Konix in the PC show), but then I saw an article in some weekly computer mag about a new 32 bit console by Fujitsu!

AAAGHGHG!

ACE Letters page tippos shokk horr£r...

OK, it's true. We can't spell at ACE. Not even our owne naimes. And larst month, the bloke wot checks the spelling went% on hollyd4w didn't hi? And wot happens, we get 181 errors on a singgle paige.

So wot do we do, I arsk you? We sakk him, that's wot....

Jokes apart, though. We are absolutely grovelling in our apologies for last month's typos horror. At 2.00am in the morning, struggling to meet a printer's deadline that had been brought forward, anything can happen – and it did.

Here's a short, but sweet, collection of your (all perfectly spelt) letters taking us to task for the disaster. And just to show no hard feelings, we've given one of them the Prize Letter award...

ACE OUSTS GRAUNIAD IN TYPOS SHOCKER

Ron Smith and the offending article

Teh 24tj issue of ACe hit teh streets (and gutters DTp joke!) in a flurry fo misplaedc commas and text, and featrued for teh first time a Dly anagra rEader-lettters page ,. Wise old
indusrty obervers reckon hte pre-computre Grauniad's longstading recorrd fro typos was smasshed in a hlistoric
this inglke issue of tehe WOrlds' favouriet advandec computer entertainment magaskine
magazine.
Stll sufferign from hsi waistline and birthday both hitting
co-inciding
39 on th e smae day, wit, ST freak reconterr and pertrubed ACE reader
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littl
tle rubb er on teh end of a 5B pencil, buttheydon't letus have anything sharp here and
and ppwe lost it. besides, we2ve gone lead free now and
we were desperate to get t he Septembber copy out in time fro July but we'll nearly got the Christ tmas isue ready now and fi you find a typo in that it s a free subby and a pint of Ruddles for you, stand on me,' he enthused
'Be there at you you news agent with your $1.50 on Setember 7th, except for Hamish Grunter up in Glasgow, cos we tol him October>
Ha Ha!
Have a free subby anway!
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ACEI wi
like getting it off your chess

Ron Smith, Southend On Sea

It's certainly nice to see that the staff at ACE have recognised that there is a largely untapped market for 'activity playbooks' in the computer world.

I look forward to the first full-blown ACE Puzzle And Sketch after such an excellent teaser in your last issue (No.24 – September).

No doubt thousands of readers enjoyed playing 'spot the error' as much as I did in the letters column. I managed to spot 104 'deliberate' mistakes, but I'm sure other readers out there can do better.

Next month can we please have a dot-to-dot picture of the Konix Multi System.

Eastside Jimmy, Stevenage

Your wish is granted, though we thought it would look better if we joined up the dots before printing it. See pages 25–28.

I've justt fnnishdd reeding ishue "24" and I've jjust got wun qquestionn:-:-
JudgING BY
the typEsettING Throught THE MagAzine. Is therE any ChanCE thAt puBlishinG DEDlin es cauSED a SOMEWHat ruShed ProDuCt....
Or is it just that none of you can spell?

Andrew S Torrance, Glasgow

How did you gess?!

NAMBY-PAMBY

Alan Hughes of Milton Keynes and Mike Walsh of Basildon don't know what they're talking about. They say that games are too difficult for the users, which just is not true. If you had a game that wasn't difficult you'd put it down after the first 5 minutes. Without difficulty, where's the challenge?

You might play a game once and not get very far in it but if you've got any guts then a few hours later you'd have another try, and get a bit further. If you could complete a game in one session then it was not worth buying in the first place.

Most people like a challenge. If this wasn't true then why are games like *The Bard's Tale* series, *Last Ninja* series, *Elite* and *Blood Money* so popular? Games players may well range from the lazy to the fanatic, but it is not always the fanatical players that send in tips and cheats NOR is it always the lazy players that ask for them.

Any game is a challenge. It's a challenge thrown down by the programmer to beat his game. *Dungeon Master* was one of the best programs ever written and all Alan Hughes can do is to abandon it because he couldn't be bothered to map all the mazes and find all the keys. What does he want? To have it all handed to him on a silver platter?

I think it's time he stopped burying his head in the sand and looked around at what's going on in the world. Games designers have to live just like the rest of us. They don't design games just for the sake of it. They design games that they, often helped by the buying trend of the software market, think are going to make the public buy their particular product. If that means creating games with a challenge then that's what they create. If Alan Hughes bothered opening his eyes in his local software store he would see that there are games that cater for all sections of the software market and a lot of them are fun as well as challenging.

On the other hand, I agree that software houses could do more in the way of offering help. Quite often everyone comes across a problem in a game, whether it's an adventure, Role-playing game or whatever, that they can't find a way round. Isn't it nice for some-one to help you out with your particular problem enabling you to get further into the game. I'm on the Adventure Helpline in ACE and I feel quite happy to help people out with their problems because I know how it feels to be stuck in a game. But am I doing some of the software house's work for them?

If you can't face a challenge then it's time to give up. The ball's in your court Alan.

Jim Laver, Herts

P.S.	Game Designers	1
	Alan Hughes	0

I would like to answer Alan Hughes' letter in the September issue. I agree with much Alan said but I feel he generalises too much. The sort of games that are found in arcades are too hard and those of us who do not have the tenacity of a hardened arcade gamer are often unable to get into their home computer equivalents. Most games also lack real depth, by which I mean variation at any level.

Now consider the pricing – at £25 for an Amiga game we have already paid for between 125 and 250 games in an arcade. After 3 games inb the arcade people like Alan may have decided that the game is not for him, but with his home computer he is stuck with over 100 paid for go's.

However strategy war games have already found the answer. I asked someone about *Vulcan* once. He told me he thought it was really easy as he could always beat the computer. When pressed further, however, he revealed that he knew little of the subtlety hidden in the programming, which means that the computer (or human) had to use different strategies as a player got better so as you progressed more things came to light and it was more fun.

I commend Alan for mentioning *Silent Service*. This game has 4 levels of difficulty and 8 submarines, environment, enemy, changes, 6 missions and 5 tours of duty. The score table is based on promotion for tonnage sunk which in turn is based on the combination of the above difficulties. A player could pick a low rating and still get high on the table if he sinks enough. If you picked a high rating, very little tonnage gets you on the table.

If a 48K computer can come up with enough variation to keep us occupied is it too much to ask that a 512K computer should produce better, at over £20 a game.

Gareth Foy, Belfast

Then while I was reading through Issue 24 of Ace and in it there was an advert by Supervision Electronics which surprised me because they were selling a Nintendo 12 bit console! Is this true? Finally I heard from a friend that there is going to be a 16 bit PC Engine!!! So can you please put me out of the mist and if you can recommend me a console.

B S Dhatri, Hampstead

The Fujitsu FM Towns is the beast you're talking about, but it's not available yet. As for choice, it's always advisable to save your cash for a machine that's (a) in the shops and (b) well-supported. The 12-bit Nintendo sounds like a typo error – something we know all about here at ACE, eh?

The Fujitsu FM Towns

A. SINCLAIR'S FIRST LETTER!

I have been buying ACE from issue one and never have I seen such a well presented magazine. But you already know this. Never have I been tempted to write before. Yes I'm one of these 'never written before types' but I have just had this great brainwave. After purchasing *Kick-off* for my Amiga and getting thumped off the computer everytime I got a few friends round and we played for 2 hours solid in our own league. Everyone agreed it was a great afternoon and experience. Then it hit me, why not share the experience with local computer players and start a local league with either software or trophy prizes to the winners and runners up? "CALL THE NEWS OF THE WORLD" And maybe if we have enough people interested we could involve other towns or even city's, after all PBM games must have started somewhere. And it must have sounded daft at first.

Please could you tell me what you think of this and your expert views and criticisms on this subject. If you think it's a good idea or would like more info please call me and print this letter so that everyone can share in this brain child. "But seriously Folks, THANKS!!

A Sinclair, Gregwock

P.S Why not have an ACE READERS CHALLANGE where your EDITOR could show us how good he is at games playing against us mear mortals.

I'm surprised that you should have missed last month's ACE Readers Challenge, set by the editor for discerning readers. Called Spot the Misprint, it attracted a record entry. See the panel for more details. The Software League sounds a great idea...

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT MINUS ONE

Please can you help me in my quest for a computer game called *Law of the West*. I love this computer game and would be very much obliged.

Nick Higton, Surrey

If you've never met, how can you be in love? I'm just crazy about this woman Haji El-Fatima, but I haven't met her either. If you should see her, get her phone number and let me know. I'll do the same with Law of the West...

GET THIS, MUM

I own a CPC 464 which I want to sell and get an Amiga 500 or Atari ST, but my mum is so far out of it that she doesn't know one end of a computer from the other. Please just say something – anything – that will make her change her mind and let me carry out my plan...

A. Swindells, Witlshire

Don't let the little brat bully you like this, mum. Force feed him with Farley's rusks until he drifts into unconsciousness, then get out to the shops, grab yourself an ST or Amiga (both equally good buys and streets ahead of the CPC) and when he recovers consciousness, chain the little beggar to his old Amstrad while you have a bit of fun.

this brain
y Folks,

Gregwock

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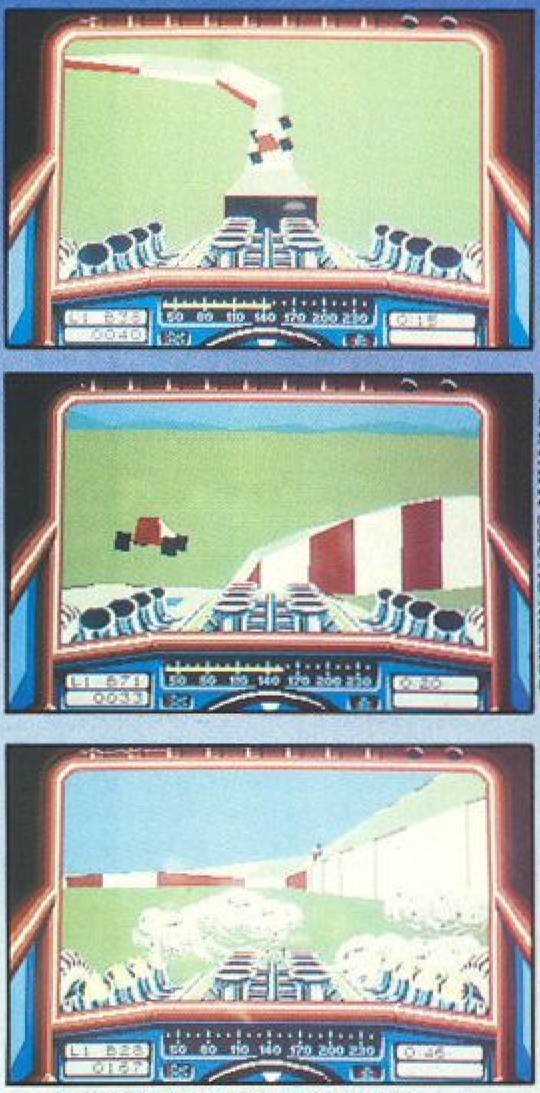
STUNT CAR RACER



Step into the driving seat of one of the most wicked stunt cars around as a Stunt Car Racer. It's now up to you to prove just how good you are and to see whether or not you can ultimately become Division One Champion.

With a super-quick, turbo-charged V8 engine that will power you to incredible speeds, and long-travel suspension that enables you to soak up the bumps, your car really is an awesome projectile. The tracks are totally out of this world. Banked corners that enable you to 'pull g', undulating bumps that throw your car uncontrollably from side to side and huge ramps that catapult you into mid-air. In fact, you seem to spend so much time airborne, you could almost qualify for a pilot's licence!

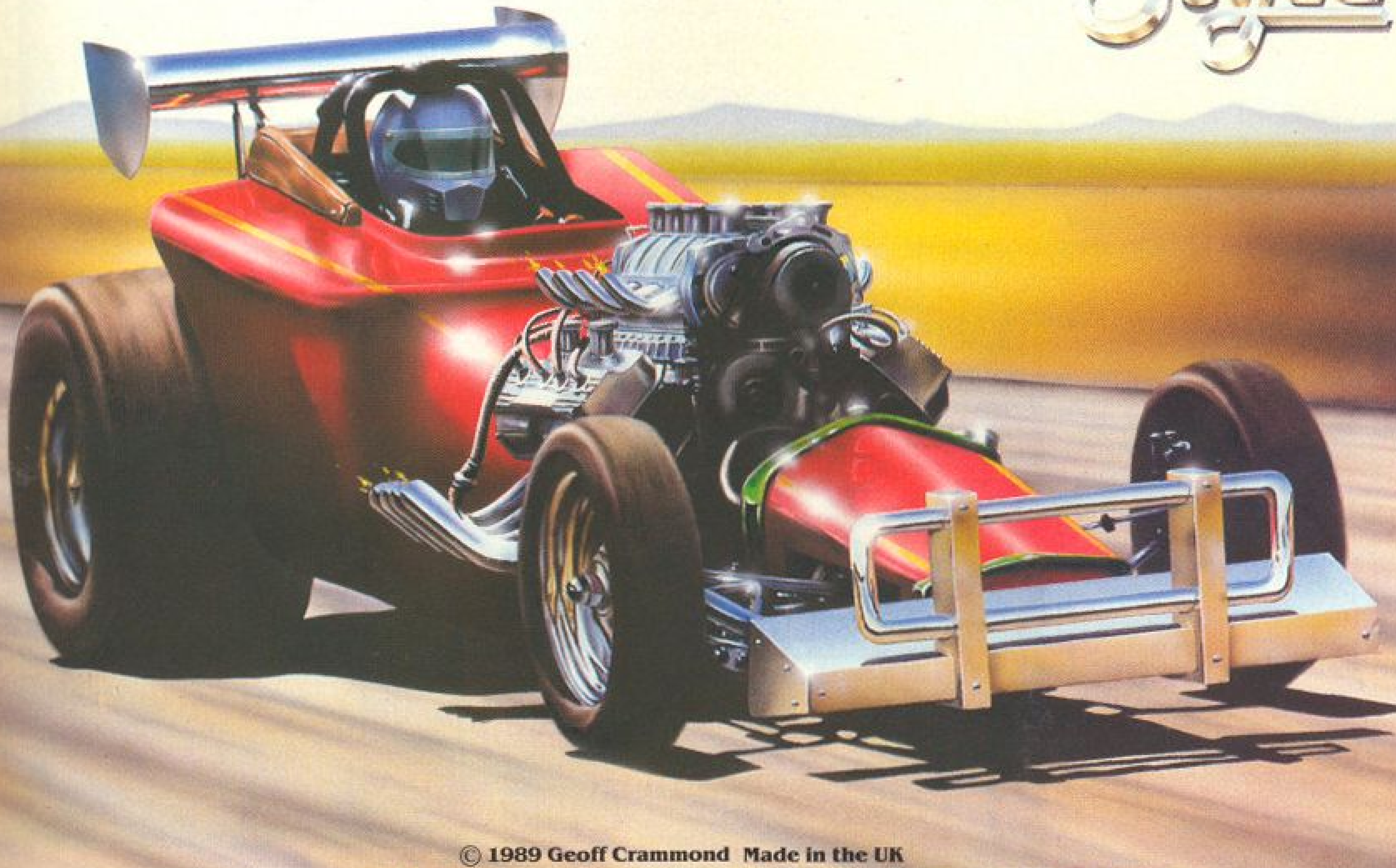
Battle it out on the track against other computer controlled rivals, such as, Dare Devil and Road Hog. Race and jump so fast that your car starts to break up under the strain and then accelerate even more. There's no prizes for being second best in this game – it's all or nothing.

Stunt Car Racer – do you think you could be up there with the best?

Stunt Car is utterly brilliant and offers adrenalin-pumping, gut wrenching high speed action that'll keep you engrossed for months. C + VG.

Stunt Car Racer is available for ST, Amiga, PC, Spectrum and Commodore 64

MicroStyle



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STATUS, STYLE, STEALEY...

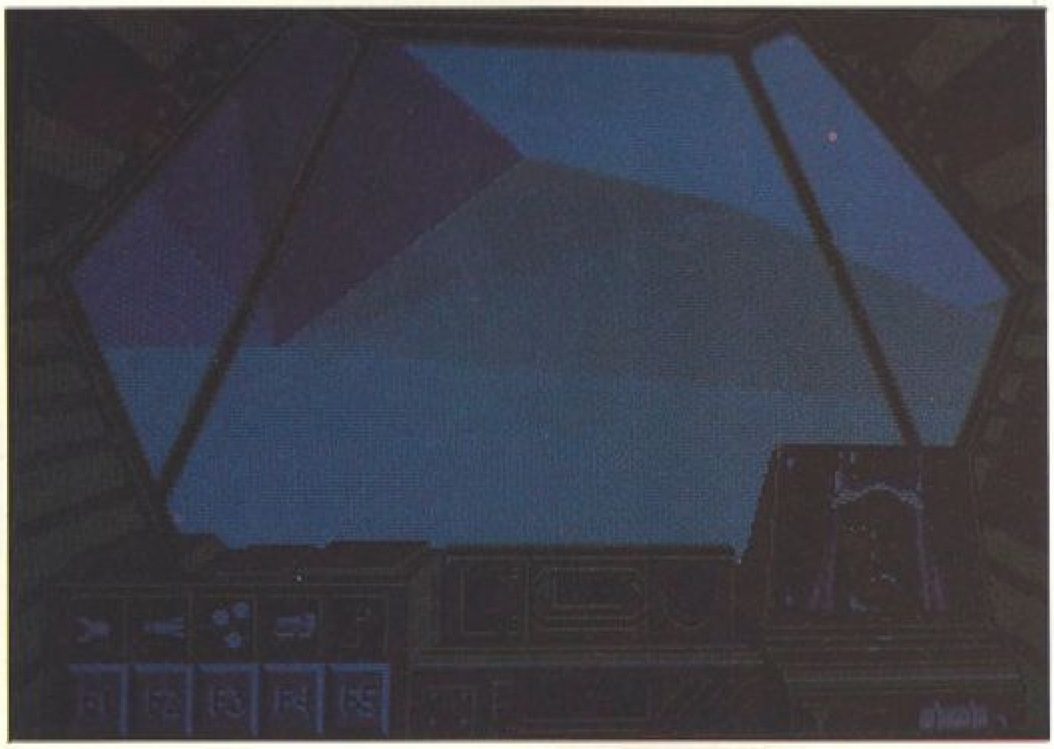
OLD GROPER GETS HIS PAWS ON TITLES UNDER DEVELOPMENT...

Bill Stealey – the 'Wild' man of simulations software, pilot extraordinaire, all-American, all-everything really, has – I can EXCLUSIVELY REVEAL– made the first mistake on the slippery slope to rack, ruin, and bankruptcy....He's started appearing in his own publicity videos.

Said promo – for the 'quite soon' to be released on PC *M1 Tank* – has Wild Bill dressed in his combat togs, reading somewhat haltingly, yet strangely compellingly, from an autocue, extolling the virtues of *Tank*. One is immediately reminded of so many American TV ads of car salesman flogging their new and quality used cars at low, low prices.

Yet as the promo goes on and the action moves onto a screen, Bill starts ad libbing a commentary on the action. Now the guy really starts getting into it and genuine enthusiasm abounds as the missiles fly and 'Red Force' starts taking damage.

And there you have part of the secret of the success of Microprose. Bill Stealey is into games, bigtime. There are heads of companies that are into coding. Heads of companies that are into cash flow. Heads of companies that are into sticking the boot into other heads of companies. But how many guys at the top are really into the games themselves – with an almost fanatical devotion? Not a lot chum.



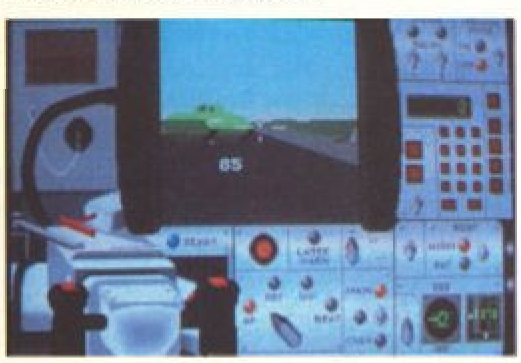
Mike Singleton's team at work for Micro Status – it's *Midwinter*. Set in the near future (so global warming doesn't exist, huh?) it's cold and set in an isolated community of humankind. Shame there's a baddy that's trying to spoil things. Just as well you, as leader of the Peace Keepers, you can recruit, order about and manipulate the inhabitants of this world. No – it's not *Lords of Midnight* with snowshoes, but expect it to be in the shops late in '89.

Combine this with the kind of single minded fanaticism that is almost exclusively American and it's no wonder Microprose are producing great games right now (check out *F15 Strike Eagle* in this issue).

M1 Tank Command, not out (again on PC), 'till September, (ST and Amiga back end of '89) looks like the most detailed tactical battlefield simulation ever to hit a home computer. The Microprose in-house 3-D graphics system is excellent – but that is only half of it. The different scenarios have you operating a tank platoon of four in concert with other friendly forces; mechanised infantry, artillery, air strike, chopper support. Modern warfare is a complex business – so is *M1 Tank*. Close to completion, this one look like it's got more meat on it than a 16oz porterhouse. Yum, yum!

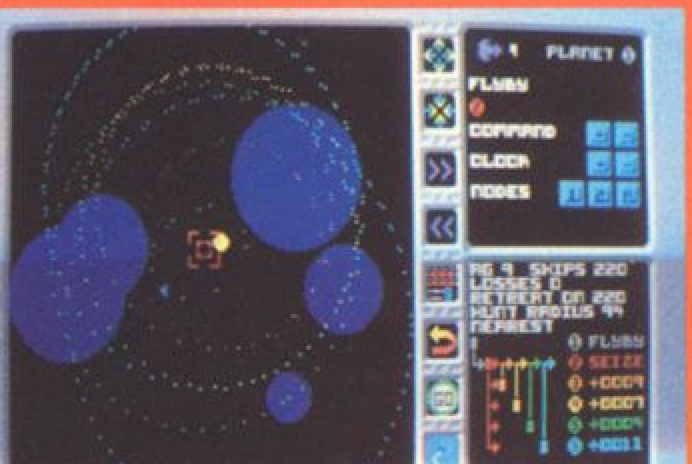
Microprose UK haven't been standing still either – despite the poor reception of the new Micro-Status and Micro-Style labels. With the acquisition of the Telecom brands, it looks like there's a certain excess of labelling down Tetbury way, if anything. Still, there is some good software in the works.

Geoff Crammond's *Stunt Car* on the ST was reviewed last month, but we neglected to mention (slap our wrists) the head-to-head version which has you playing against another person, via a serial link. Yahoo! Slows the thing down a tad, but it's worth it. This head-to-head function should be on the Amiga too. Expect other versions – Spectrum, 64, and PC later in this year..

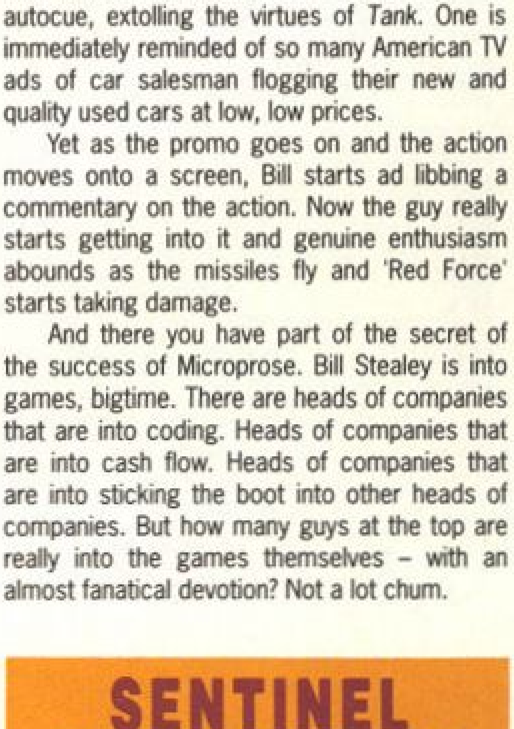


***M1 Tank* – close to completion.**

Deep and Sophisticated Pt 2 – *Star Lord*, programmed by Mike Singleton. Possibly the most intimidating game ever with up to 16 (provisionally) players fighting over the domination of a galaxy of a thousand or so stars. Gulp! It might not look flash – at this development stage – but for sure this one is going to have months of play in it.....particularly as there may be a 'send a disc' PBM version.



SENTINEL SUCCESSOR?



Tower of Babel – ultimate in DIY (Design It Yourself...)?

Pete Cooke (*Tau Ceti*, *Academy*, etc) is going to be doing the Spectrum version of *Stunt Car* for Microprose. And he's just about finished an extraordinarily good thing for Microprose, called *Tower of Babel*. Inevitably, *TOB* is going to be labelled a "3-D Puzzle Game". It deserves better treatment.

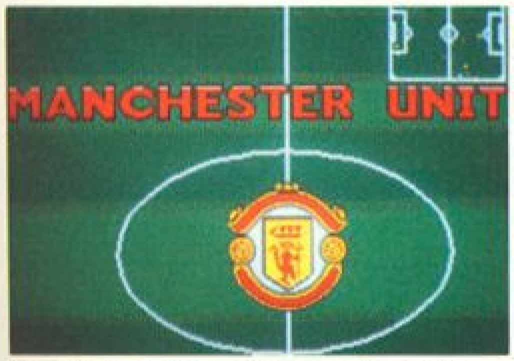
TOB is a fresh and innovative game with you controlling remote droids who have to complete different tasks on each different level. Hmmm – that's like saying Unified Field Theory is about numbers. *TOB* is complex – but my opinion is that anyone that went ape over, say, *Sentinel* will find the same attraction in this one – which includes the most sophisticated level designer I've seen on any game ever.

FOOTBALL CRAZY?

There are a hell of a lot of footie games about – and you want to know why? Footie sells, that's what. But what about the games?

Allegedly, even something as naff as *Roy of the Rovers* virtually flies off the shelves in Boots and a game as fab as *Matchday II* (Jon Ritman – come back to home computing....all is forgiven!!) significantly depletes the world supply of magnetic media when released.

You'll have noticed the trend to try and licence named footballers onto games and there's a lot of logic in that, after all, certain players – particularly England caps – have followings, even if they move clubs. Even if you used to hate Spurs, Hoddle was obviously a genius (ducks down behind high substantial object to avoid volley of broken bottles).

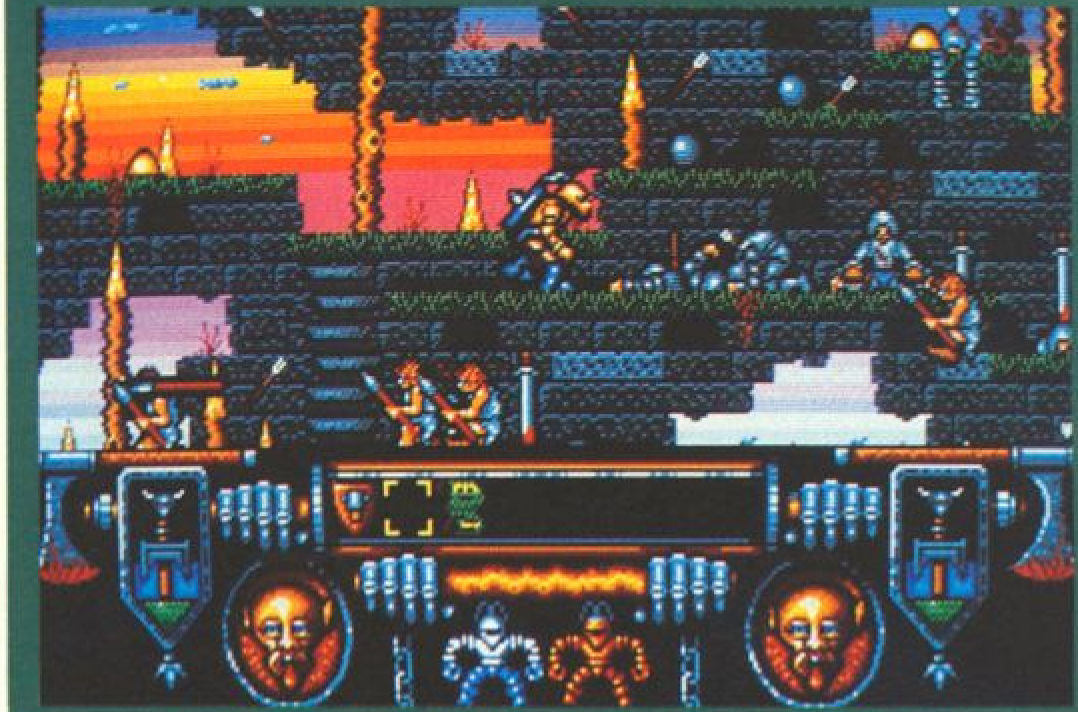


Man Utd – club bought, game for sale...

But licensing a team? Slightly more risky if you ask me. First announced – if my memory serves me correctly – was Liverpool from Grand Slam. Now it appears that Krisalis, the software arm of development house Teque have got the licence to do a Manchester United game for the next three seasons.

Teque do , of course, do a lot of work in the conversion line, for Grand Slam. Any minor embarrassment here?

Knowing how cuddly Teque's Tony Kavenha and Grand Slam's Stephen Hall are (don't titter at the back, please!) probably not. First out onto the pitch, however, will be *Man Utd* – which is a mixture of the traditional arcade football game plus a full *Football Manager* style of thing on top. Krisalis should be releasing that at the PC Show, while Liverpool will be appearing later on in the season – late Oct for Spectrum, Amstrad and PC, with Amiga and ST coming along mid November. Apparently the £20 million Knighton paid for the club didn't include the game rights..time will tell whether he was right to ignore them!



***Onslaught*, coded for Hewson by the *Verminator* and *Custodian* team of Chris Hinsley and Nigel Brownjohn. This really does look fab. A very neat raster effect in the background gives a spectrum of 128 colours – and although there's only (only!!) the usual ST 16 colours for the sprites, etc, it has a great medieval feel to it.**

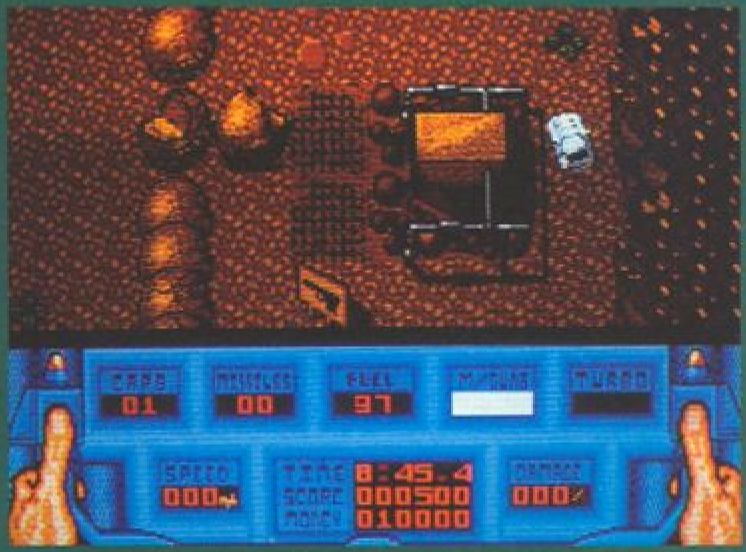
The final thing is due to have four arcade style sequences to it, plus a large (10 Kingdoms each with 256 locations) campaign section as your Fanatic super-warrior sets out to capture the enemy flag. Or something. Again, out ST and Amiga in November – don't it look nice on the telly?

HEWSON'S HOWITZERS

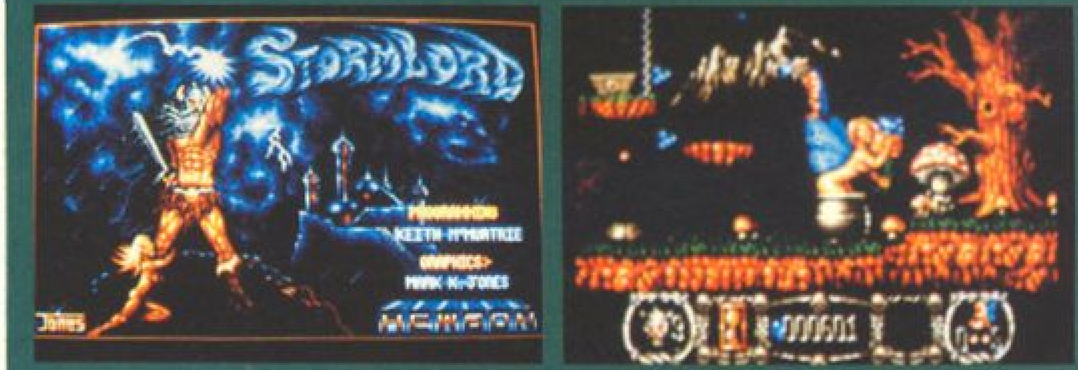
Hewson is bringing out the big guns for Chrissy this year with a veritable salvo of original product, mainly for 16 Bit. And jolly good some of it is looking too.

Is there room in the world for another driving game? We shall see, but at any rate, this one is a plan view vertical scroller with racing elements, shooting elements and Halfords elements, as you can upgrade the motor as you go through the game, assuming you can appropriate the cash along the way. Called *5th Gear* it's due for release in ST and Amiga in November of this year.

Turning the wonderfulness knob up another notch, there's *Stormlord*, an arcade adventure set in the traditions and graphic style of Faerie. Written by Raffaelle Cecco (of *Cybernoid 1 & II* fame) the distinctive sprites and backgrounds plus the usual plethora of puzzles will make this one to look out for later in the year.



Fifth Gear



Stormlord from Raffaelle Cecco, programmer of Cybernoid. Spenser's Faerie Queen makes it to silicon at last...well, almost...

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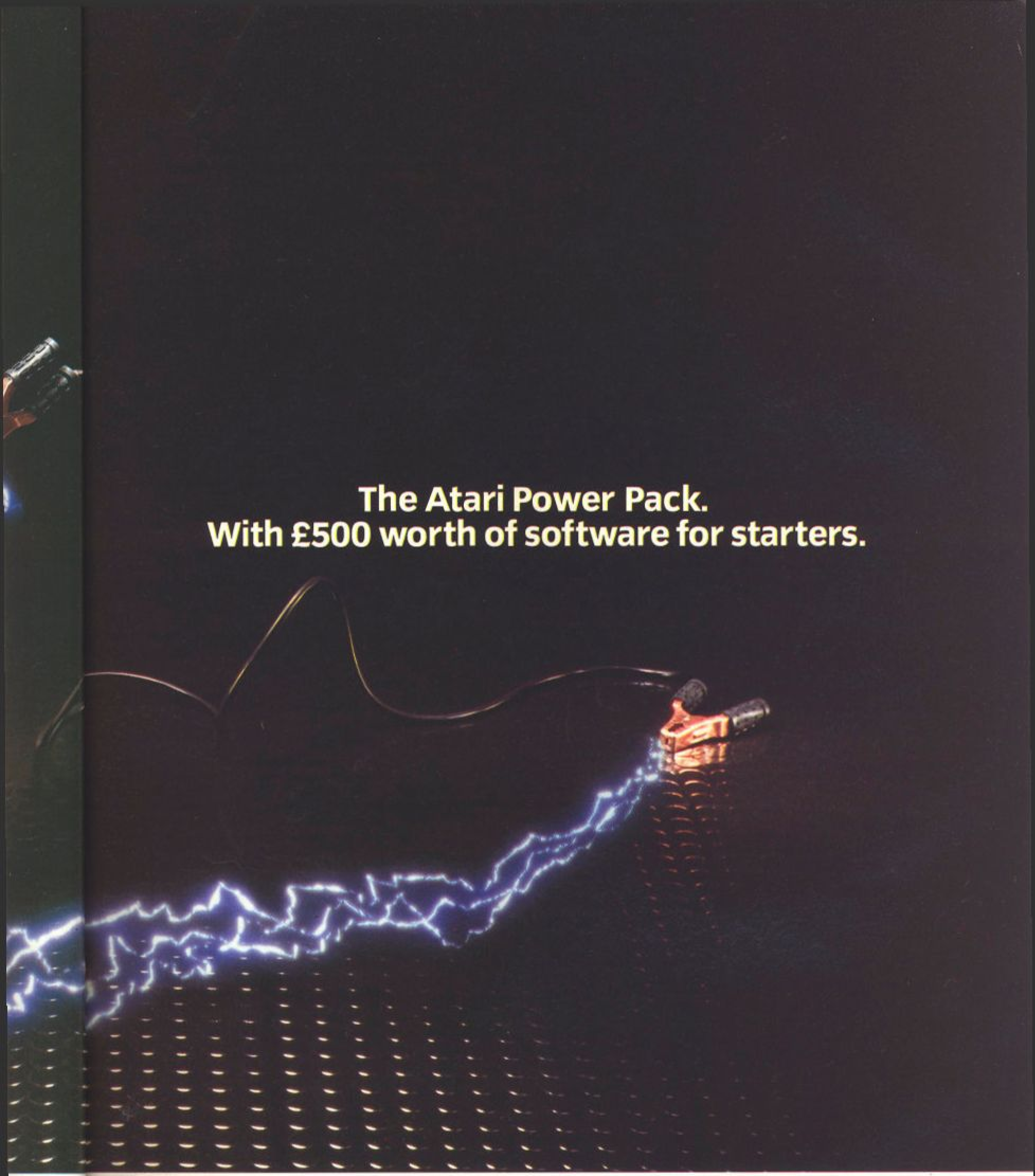

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MEAN MOTHER!

JOHN COOK DISCOVERS A NEW ARCADE BOARD WITH 2048 SPRITES

How is a game physically stored on a coin-op? On ROM as a rule, incorporated into a PCB (Printed Circuit Board) that is dedicated to that game. That is, if you took the ROM chips out of one game and transferred them into the sockets of another, chances are all you'd get is an entertaining burning smell and a hole in your personal cash flow.

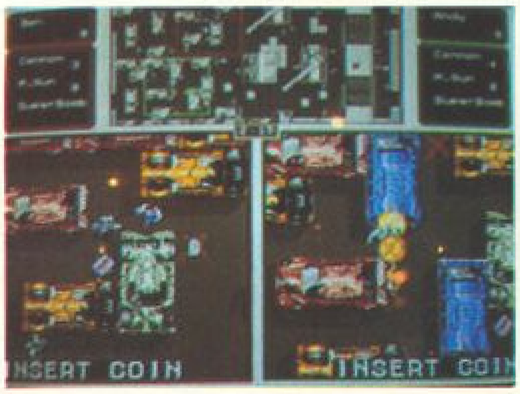
There is a measure of standardisation however – the majority of PCB's have an input/output of joystick, video and sound, conforming to an industry standard called – JAMMA. This means that PCB's are portable from cabinet to cabinet – as all cabinet combinations are rigged up to JAMMA specification.

All very well – but if an operator finds that *Alien Genocide* is slacking off on the takings and wants to install the brand new *Vesuvian Bloodbath*, he still has to buy a whole new PCB to fit in the old cabinet. Expensive, eh? For a brand spanking new state-of-the-art job, we are talking something in the range of £600-700.

The price tag is not too surprising – games are big-time expensive to develop, but more importantly, they are now becoming hardware intensive as the manufacturers throw more and more silicon at the boards to make them ever the more faster and fabbier than ever before.

The trade is aware that this price tag is a little on the high side and has developed some strategies to try and bring the price of the games down, while keeping the standard up.

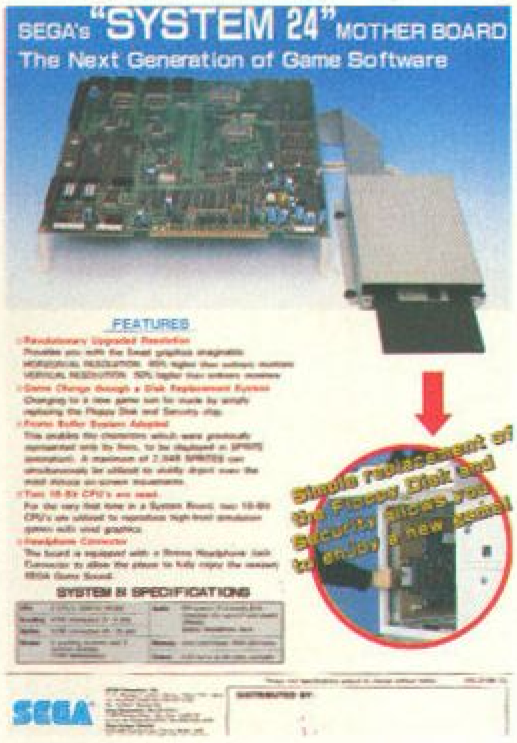
Capcom has tried to get around this problem with its new CP System Board (more about this little wonder next month incidentally) by having a standard base mother board and designing in the possibility for changing the game by simply changing the secondary boards, so cutting down the manufacturing costs. That's one approach. Sega have tried something different with its System 24.



Crackdown, System 24

The System 24 mother board comes in a special 26" monitor, two player, three fire button cabinet – and it's got quite an impressive spec. Two 68000 control the show, but they have considerable hardware support, with hardware sprites (max 2048!) and hardware screen splitting (two independently scrolling plus two windows). 4352 colours displayable out of a palate of 32768. Eeeek! Add to this 1.36Meg of RAM plus a 256K ROM and you have a machine with the vital statistics of Miss World.

But, as they say, that's not all – the secret to System 24 is that the games are downloaded into the machine on 3.5" disc. Therefore, the theory goes, instead of buying a new board for a new game, you buy a disc (plus a security chip.....yup, a dongle!). Cheaper than all those chips. On the downside, the basic system itself is not cheap.



SEGA's "SYSTEM 24" MOTHER BOARD
The Next Generation of Game Software

FEATURES

Revolutionary Upgraded Resolution

Game Change through a Disk Replacement System

Frame Buffer System Adopted

Two 16-Bit CPU's are used

Headphone Connector

SYSTEM 24 SPECIFICATIONS

Simple replacement of the Floppy Disk and Security Chip lets you enjoy a new game!

SEGA

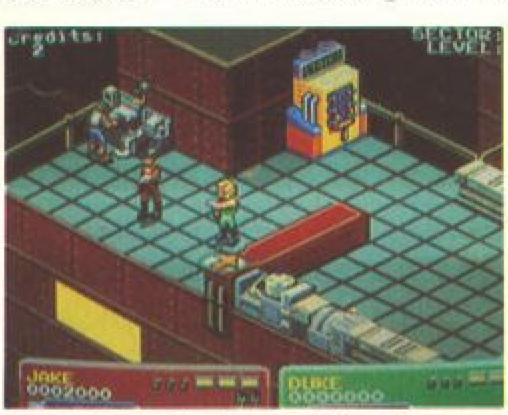
DISTRIBUTED BY:

Games produced on System 24 to date haven't been that good – *Scramble Spirits* (ordinary 1942 clone), *Gain Ground* (intriguing top down combat/strategy game) and the much more commercial *Crack Down* (see pic). However, more are on the way – a golf game called *Supermasters* is the next – and as the programmers get used to the system, the games can only get better.

Whatever, as coin-ops in general become more and more hardware intensive, we're likely to see this approach to cost cutting from other manufacturers. System 24 looks like being the way forward.

ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS

Atari Games have always been good for a laugh. Tongue in cheek games like *Toobin'* and *APB* have proved that in the past, with distinctive graphics and a touch of the absurd thrown in for good measure. Its latest, *Escape from the Planet of the Robot Monsters* carries on it that tradition – this time extracting the urine from the comic book sci-fi genre.



Escape from the planet of the robot monsters

Atari

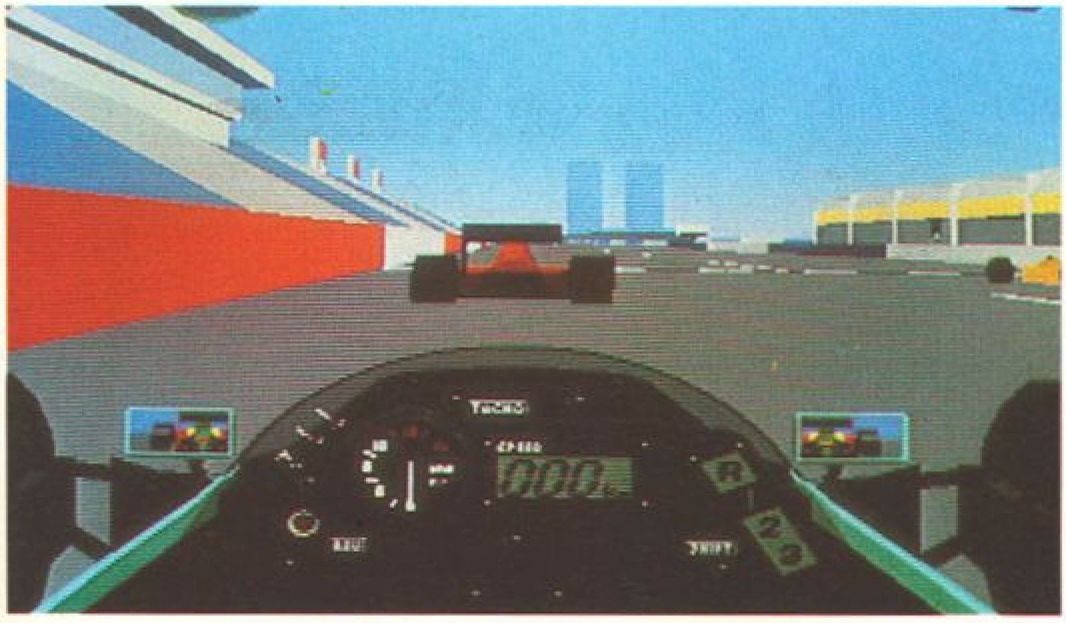
The scam? Jake (cool with sunglasses) and Duke (blonde ex-surfer) – Players One and Two – have to beam down to Planet X where evil Reptilions are holding captive thousands of human slaves and making them assemble a robot army that is destined (unless you can do something super-heroic to stop it) to destroy the Earth.

Me, I'd Nuke the place – but ever the humanitarians – the Yanks have you zapping about the place, taking out different breeds of Robot, with ray gun, committing acts of wonton vandalism on the way. There's no question *EFTPOTRM* is cute.

The style of game is one more familiar to owners of home computer than arcade freaks – being in isometric 3-D. That takes a bit of getting used to, but the game plays well, and the animated antics of the two dudes will, more than likely, fix a grin on your face as you dash about the levels, liberating enslaved bimbos.

There are three sections to the game – this main isometric bit, an end-of-level monster that looks like the Daddy of those little gits in the old Smash instant mash adverts plus another inter level bonus bit where you have to drive your speeder through a maze. So there's a bit of variety too.

A fun game that you'll find a refreshing change for the plethora of beat em' ups and *Nemesis* clones. Enjoy!



Winning Run – fastest polygons in the universe

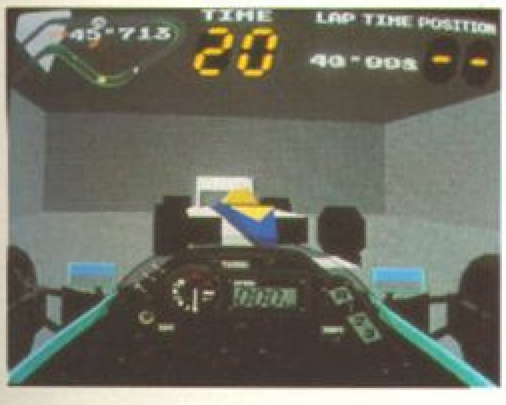
WINNING RUN

Now here's a funny thing. *Winning Run* was previewed at this January's ATEI Show (the main trade show for the European Coin-op industry)......but units are only now coming into general circulation. There's only one comment to make here. Whatever you do – get on this machine!

Namco

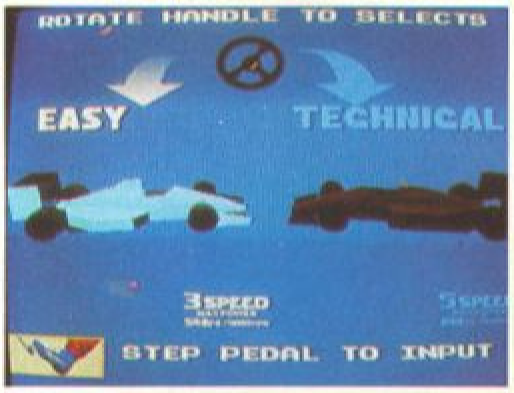
Hard Drivin' was certainly a breakthrough product in terms of programming technique – filled polygons. *Winning Run* takes a similar technique (Namco call it the 'Polygoniser') and makes it much faster, smoother, better. If you have any soul, after a few goes on this masterpiece, you will beg to have its children. It really is that good.

OK, so it's a racing game. A Formula One simulator even. But using the fastest filled polygon graphic system in the Universe. With the best race driving model in the Universe. With the best "throw your breakfast around" sit-in unit in the Universe. In other words we think you'll like it!



Winning Run

At the start up you have two options – Easy (3 Speed) or Technical (7 Speed). Start out on Easy, but real men eventually get to reach Technical and at that time the car takes on all the properties of a Formula One beastie. Not easy to control, John. No slamming the foot to the floor all the way around here!



Winning Run

Even so, *Winning Run* is still a very playable and accessible game – with a host of touches that blatantly show off the superlative technical achievement of the unit. See those wheels – that's no sprite, they're made up of lots of little polys. So are all the other cars. See the palate fade up through the colours from background to foreground – just as if they were coming out of the haze. Wow!

Some things are better experienced than described on paper. *Winning Run* is one of these things. Suffice to say it is the ultimate coin-op driving experience to date. Play it!

(Thanks this month go to all at Deith Leisure, Paul Ashley at Brent Leisure and last but not least, Kevin "Hard Drivin'" Williams at Electrocoin).

HI-TECH DIRTFOX

Namco's next release using the technology it's developed for the fab games Assault and Metal Hawk is a driving effort called Dirtfox, Can't tell if it's any good yet, but we should be taking that classic 'in-depth' look next month.

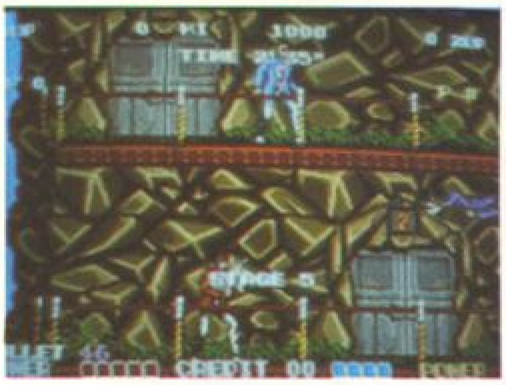
EXTENDED PLAY

ACE gossip from the coin-op closet...

Y SPY

After Secret Agent from Data East last month, now we have SPY from Konami. Special Project Y has you plus a mate kicking and shooting your way onto the New Years Honours List, fighting for truth and democracy (yawn).

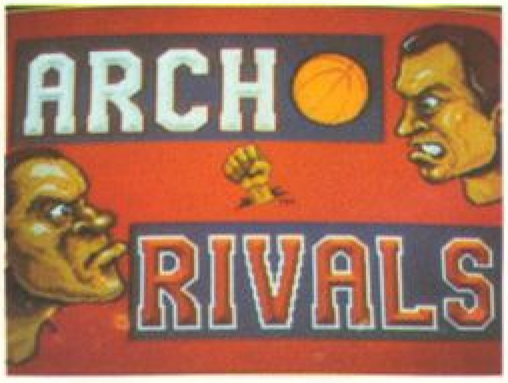
Data East's *SPY...*



ARCH RIVALS

Arch Rivals is a new basketball game from Data East – and it plays as well as it looks. Combine this with a very distinctive – and wacky – graphics approach and you get a very attractive game indeed. And you don't have to be 7'6" to be any good at it, either.

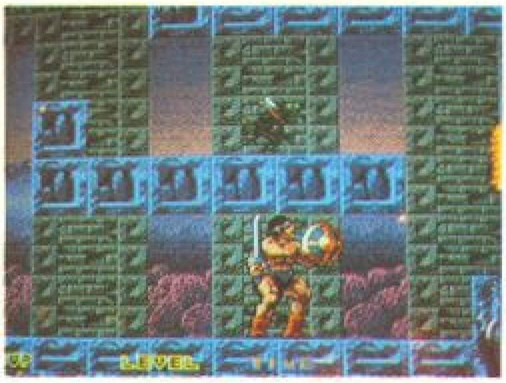
Arch Rivals

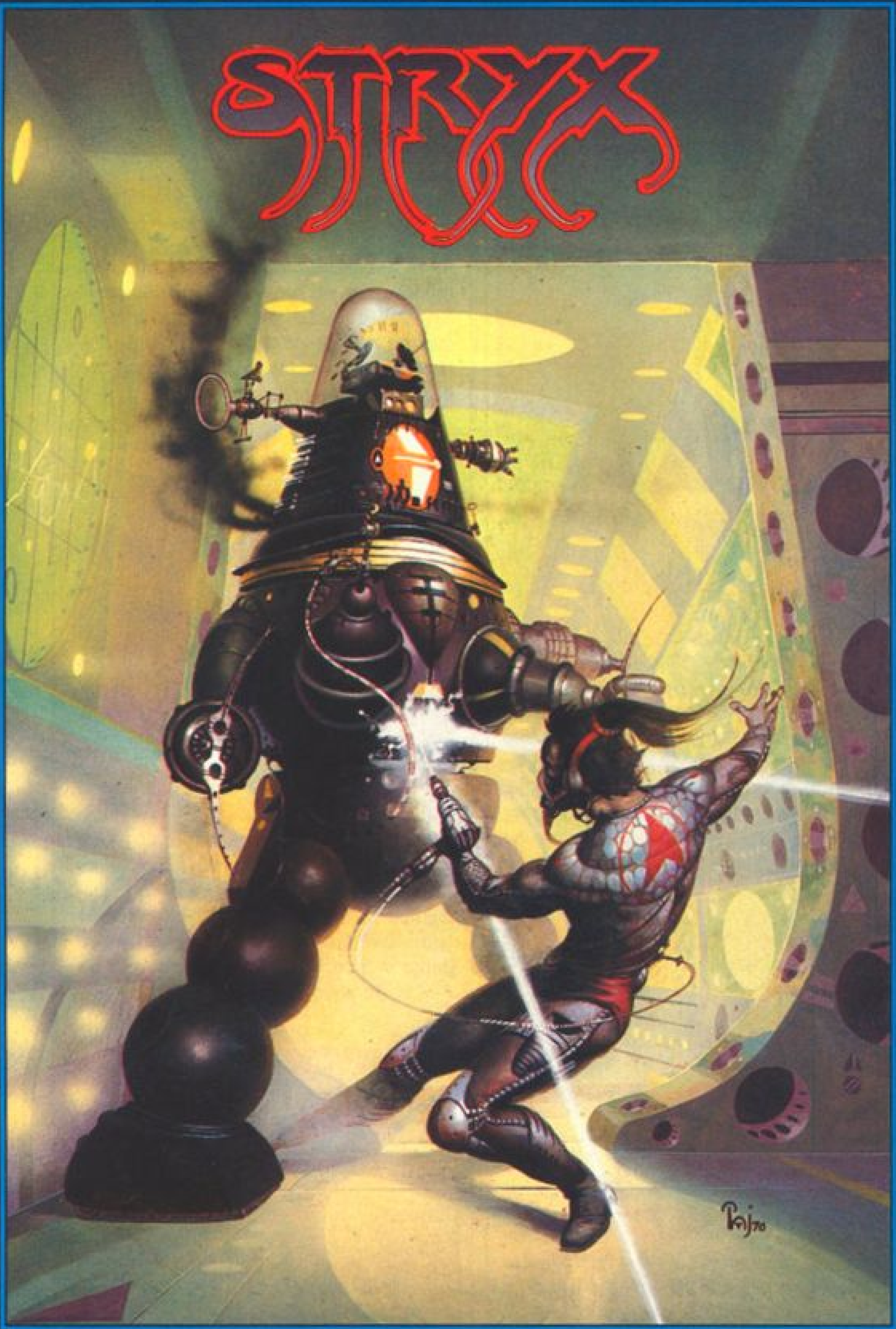


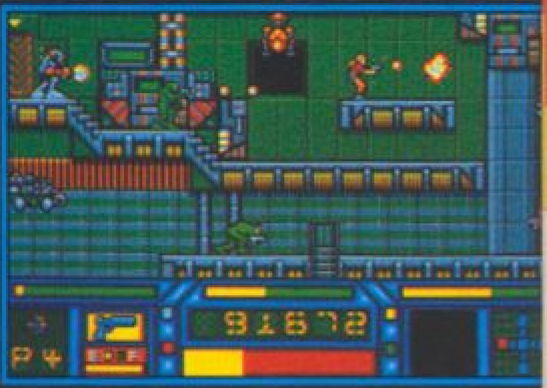
RASTAN SAGA CONTD.

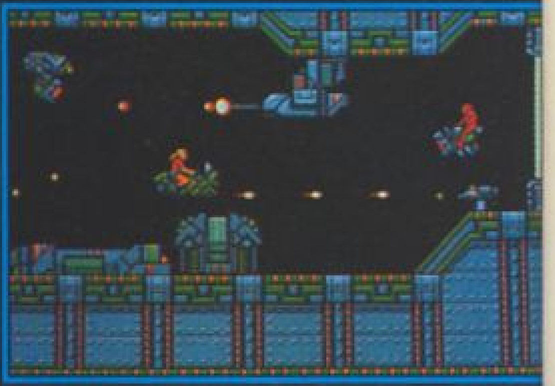
The one all you kiddies at heart have been waiting for, I bet – Rastan Saga II. This one takes Rastan Saga 1 that teeny bit further – the graphics are better for a start and the gameplay, although nothing startlingly new, is good. Worth the odd heroic 10p.

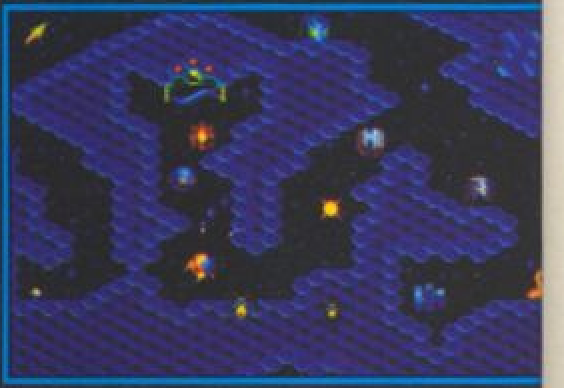
Rastan Saga II











PSYCLAPSE

- ★ ***Ultra smooth 8 way scrolling***
- ★ ***Designed with small fully animated characters from Garvan Corbett, the artist who brought you the classic hit Barbarian***
- ★ ***Multi-directional free format weapon usage***
- ★ ***Large playfield for even more action.***

You're really up against it this time. Those revolting robots have finally upped and turned their horribly powerful weapons on their kind human masters.
Someone's got to stop it before it all gets out of hand. I mean, you just can't have bloodthirsty Cyborg assassins roaming the streets of Dome City and expect the citizens to put up with it. Who on earth is going to sort out the mess? You guessed – you get the job.

Fortunately, you are just a little bit on the special side. You are Stryx, the product of Project Alpha Secure, the meanest fighting, smartest thinking machine ever invented. Half-man, half-robot, you are the business, the only one who can stop those wicked Cyborgs.

You'll have to work hard, though, blasting hordes of the revolting creatures (such a sad waste of scrap metal) and rescuing the keys to the Lifeforce.

So, Stryx, you'd better get your jet pack on for some high level robot stomping through the immensely complex underground world of the Dome cities. It's a tough assignment, and time is running out.

AMIGA/ATARI ST £19.95

Screen Shots from the Atari ST Version

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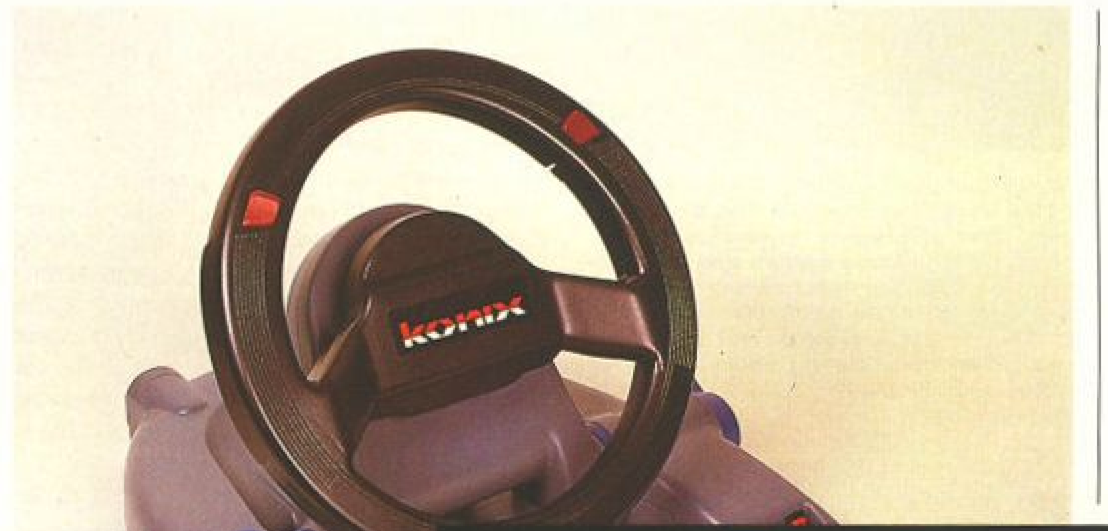
THE REAL THING

ICHARD MONTEIRO AND THE ACE TEAM GO KONIX-CRAZY...

The Konix console is here. Is this the ultimate games machine we've all been waiting for?



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You know you're in for something out of the ordinary as soon as you get your hands on the Konix console. The unit is large compared to other consoles, but lightweight and, due to its compact design, it almost feels smaller; yet the abundance of knobs, interfaces, and expansion ports means you can take five minutes just finding out what goes where. It's an exciting process...

The Konix is a racing car, an aeroplane, a motorbike – it's what you make it. The U-shaped base has a spindle running between the two straights of the U and the main controller rests on a column attached to the spindle. This controller can be pulled towards you or pushed away from you. A three-way clutch release knob on the left arm (viewed from the front) of the U base determines whether the centre column remains locked or is allowed to swivel between two positions.

Four control modes are possible: car, motorbike, helicopter, and aeroplane. Between them, these cover just about every simulation program you're likely to tackle, although we thought the omission of a periscope was bad news for Microprose. In car mode the control pillar remains locked. The steering wheel is pulled off for aeroplane mode and the central pillar allowed to move between two locations. For motorbike mode the control pillar is pushed forward and locked while the handelbars are produced by swivelling the handgrips. Helicopter mode involves laying the central column flat and connecting another controller. This isn't supplied, but will be available as an add-on.

Particularly clever is the 'judder' in the central column which can be used by programmers to produce tactile feedback. Another neat design feature is the way the fire-buttons on the steering wheel engage with the handlebar buttons when the wheel is engaged – a simple mechanical solution that avoids the need for electrical interfacing between the wheel and the main unit.

Push the controller forward and your craft rises; pull the controller towards you and your craft descends; crash and the controller judders... Never before have air combat and racing games had the chance to be so realistic. Unfortunately, theonly software we were able to test on the machine (see panels throughout this feature) did not make maximum use of the control possibilities, though there may be some nutcases who would like to play Last Ninja II with using the aeroplane controller.

JOY DIVISION

More conventional control possibilities are available, however. On the same arm as the three-way clutch are joystick ports 1 and 2. These accept standard joysticks for control of traditional-style platform games, arcade adventures and the like. Since most early games will be conversions of existing hits and will consequently require traditional joysticks to operate them this seems fairly essential.

However, there's more to these joystick ports than meets the eye. Two Konix machines – one powered and the other not – can be connected together for two-player action. Joystick port 1 on the powered master machine is connected via a lead to joystick port 2 on the second console. The second machine acts simply as a very complex joystick. Unfortunately, you can't attach a Konix console to your micro and use it as the ultimate/most expensive game controller.

ROCK AND ROLL YEARS

It was Wyn Holloway, Konix boss and designer extraordinaire, who originally thought up a design for a radical new game controller. He set his engineers to work on some electronics to power it.

Enter Cambridge-based trio Martin Brennan, Ben Cheese, and John Mathieson (known collectively as Flare Technology) whose prototype Flare One was exclusively reported in ACE Issue 11. Flare needed a company to mass produce its machine – after approaching several hardware manufacturers like Atari and Amstrad, Konix expressed an interest.

After requesting a 16-bit processor, larger colour palette and even greater chip integration, Flare and the Konix engineers came up with the hardware.

Because there's no keyboard or in-built language in the Konix, programmers have to use PDS systems to squirt data into the console during development. A gang of five Birmingham University graduates – Chris Gibbs, Fred Gill, Martin Green, Jon Steele, James Torjussen – wrote the low-level drivers that enable the PDS to communicate with the Konix development system. In addition, the ATD lads (Attention to Detail) created an art and two sound packages to help programmers convert existing file formats (Degas, Neochrome, IFF, sound samples and the like) to something the Konix can cope with.

Atari ST
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C64/128
Spectrum
Amstrad
IBM + more
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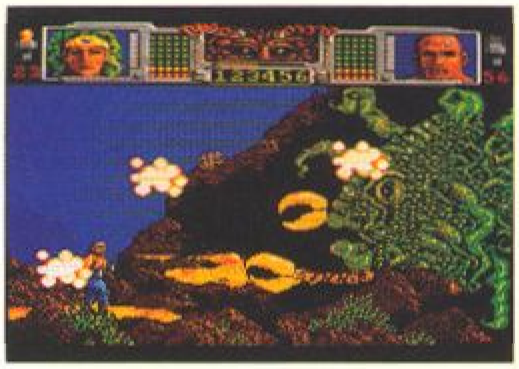
POWER
FRUSTRATION
CORRUPTION
WARNING!
Games Overload!

ACE breaks the news about the Flare One...



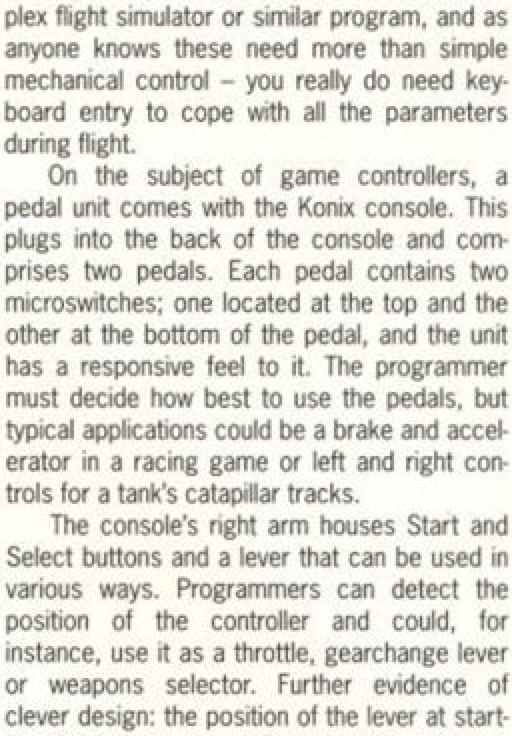
We got our hands on a pre-prod version of Mev Dinc's *Hammerfist*. The game features several graphic scenarios which, combined with large sprites and brilliantly drawn backgrounds, simply wouldn't have been possible on another machine. The feel of the software isn't much different than that running on an ST or an Amiga, except for the speed – which is mindboggling!

Another neat design point here: the double-joystick port is actually a single 25-pin D connector with some of the pins removed, further cutting production costs. Other machine manufacturers might take this up...

Incidentally, joystick port 1 will be used by the helicopter controller (when it appears) and port 2 will be able to accept a keypad. This latter point could be a vital feature for the Konix in future as it would allow alphanumeric entry, something other consoles keep promising but are always slow on delivering. This is particularly important for the Konix, since the hardware is strong enough to support a highly complex flight simulator or similar program, and as anyone knows these need more than simple mechanical control – you really do need keyboard entry to cope with all the parameters during flight.

On the subject of game controllers, a pedal unit comes with the Konix console. This plugs into the back of the console and comprises two pedals. Each pedal contains two microswitches; one located at the top and the other at the bottom of the pedal, and the unit has a responsive feel to it. The programmer must decide how best to use the pedals, but typical applications could be a brake and accelerator in a racing game or left and right controls for a tank's catapillar tracks.

The console's right arm houses Start and Select buttons and a lever that can be used in various ways. Programmers can detect the position of the controller and could, for instance, use it as a throttle, gearchange lever or weapons selector. Further evidence of clever design: the position of the lever at start-up determines the default volume level for music and sound effects.



ATD's Art package: the palette on the right gives you some idea of the enormous range of colours available...

INSIDE STORY

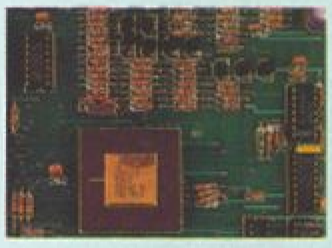
If you've had a peek at the circuit board inside almost any computer you will have discovered that it virtually fills the inside of the machine's case. Because there's not much room inside the Konix console, the circuit board hasn't got any choice but to be small. Unbelievably the board is little bigger than the double-sided drive (7.25 by 4.75-inches). And the component count is extraordinarily low. Forget very large scale integration – the Konix design meant ultra large scale integration had to be employed. Just about everything of any importance is contained in one chip: sound and graphics handling, disk controller, blitter, ROM, fast RAM, arithmetic and logic unit, control ports. It's a monster 160-pin slab of silicon known as an ASIC (application specific integrated circuit).

Apart from the ASIC there's 256K of RAM on two pseudo-static memory chips (pseudo because the chips have their own on-board refresh unit) and an 8086 processor clocked at 6MHz. This 16-bit processor is slightly redundant. The original hardware design featured an 8-bit processor, perfectly adequate given the power of the chips it is working with, but Konix wanted the 16-bit cachet and the developers gave it to them.

The video controller inside the ASIC is capable of three resolutions: 256 by 200 pixels using 256 colours, 512 by 200 using 16 colours, 256 by 200 using 16 colours. The colourful low resolution screen uses up 50K of RAM – each pixel taking up one byte. While that makes for fast screen operations, it does mean that a large chunk of memory is unavoidably used.

BYTE THE BULLET

The low res byte per pixel mode will probably be the favourite for games programmers simply because graphics manipulations are easy and fast. A typical ST or Amiga screen is made up of four bitplanes. Each byte of a bitplane corresponds to a row of eight pixels on screen. The video chip has to combine information held in the same area of each bitplane to find out the colour of an individual pixel. It's an incredible performance which requires four reads just to find out what is actually stored in one location on the screen. All this is just one quick simple operation with the Konix's video controller.



ASIC – computer on a chip.

512 by 200 pixel mode also uses up 50K of memory. However, in this case each byte looks after two adjacent pixels. The third mode is the most economic, only requiring 25K of RAM. Again, every nybble takes care of one pixel.

Colour is determined by a 12-bit palette. The number of combinations you can fit into a 12-bit register is 4096. Even though the screen modes are comparatively chunky, a palette of 4096 colours means that some very fine shading is possible – particularly when 256 colours are used. There really isn't any reason why you should have to put up with chunky graphics. Good anti-aliasing techniques will see to that.

If you're not concerned at losing colours – and, frankly, it gets tricky trying to find uses for 256 of them – the screen can be split into areas of different modes. The Konix takes this further than other machines: you can set each byte of screen memory to be either one low-res or two high-res pixels. The possibilities are mindboggling.

For performing operations on chunks of memory there's a 16-bit blitter that can move nearly 5Mbytes of memory in a second or two 50K screens every frame refresh. But it's not just conventional memory moving that makes this blitter special; if the screen is set up correctly the chip can perform collision detection and depth-sorting tasks automatically.

PUMP UP THE VOLUME

The most impressive portion of the ASIC is the RISC-technology digital signal processor (DSP). RISC technology is also used in the ARchimedes and involves processor design that, instead of performing a large number of very complex operations (as the 68000 can), offers a smaller number of very simple operations – but performs them at very high speeds.

The DSP can move a 3D object consisting of 3000 vertices 50 times every second. Although the DSP's clock speed is 'only' 12MHz (12 million cycles or operations per second), while a typical 68000 instruction takes four, eight or 12 cycles to execute, a DSP instruction only takes one.

The DSP also has a 16-bit 12 million instructions per second (MIP) arithmetic and logic unit. Multiplications can be calculated over 50 times faster than the 68000 in an ST or Amiga.

Because of its processing speed the DSP could be used extensively for maths-heavy operations. 3D animations, say. By combining the power of the blitter and the DSP it is possible to calculate and display 3D rotations at amazing speeds.

The DSP is also in charge of generating sound. A ROM look-up table helps it synthesise FM sounds. But that's just one type of noise – samples can also be used. And these can be anything up to 14-bit in quality. Not quite 16-bit CD sound, but close enough. You can emulate virtually any type of sound generator so long as you write the drivers. Yes, it's nice. Even more so when you realise it is capable of 10-channel – maybe more – sound in stereo.

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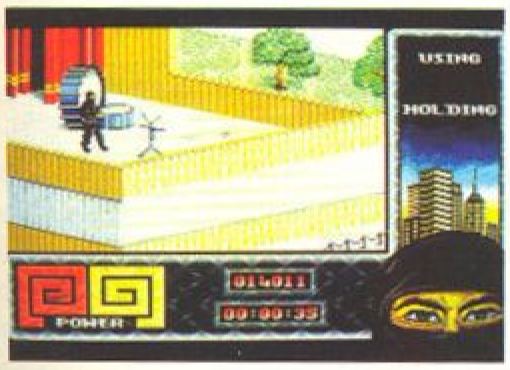
RAM IT HOME

Unlike other game consoles whose software comes on some form of memory card, Konix's machine includes a 3.5-inch double-sided drive in the design. The disks can hold 880K of information and, because of the machine's hardware, access to saved data is possible while a game is running. Since disks are currently a lot cheaper than memory cards (and likely to be for the foreseeable future), this has to be good news.

Konix, in conjunction with firmware designers Attention To Detail, reckon to have come up with a disk format that will defeat crackers and commercial pirates but naturally they're being coy about revealing details. The upper limit price point for games has been set at £14.99 – almost half the price of existing console games.

Two moulded 'exhaust ports' at the back of the console provide connections for everything from power to peripherals. Power is supplied via a power pack. It's a pity this couldn't have been placed out of sight inside the Console's casing – unfortunately mechanical and electronic parts are to blame for the lack of room and there would have been serious heat dissipation problems. A 13-pin DIN Atari ST-like connector is used to supply the video signal to any RGB linear/Scart monitor. There's also a modulator socket for sending the output to a TV. Sound is sent through a 3.5mm stereo jack. An 8-pin DIN exists for plugging in peripherals like the light gun or moving chair. Finally, there's an expansion slot for an extra 512K of memory or game cartridges.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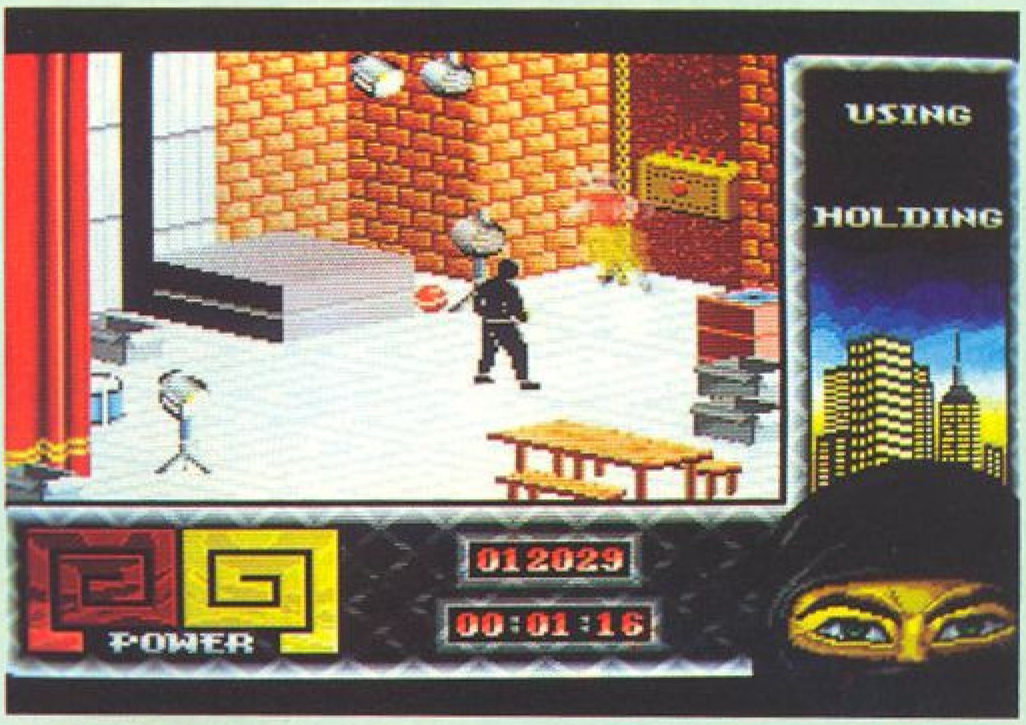
POWER

Playing Ninja II on the Konix is an experience! Converted by ATD, the game literally scorches across the screen. Although the software doesn't make use of the dedicated controllers (you'll have to wait for the next System 3 Konix release for that) it has several features that couldn't come on any other machine – especially the flickering, colour graduated energy panels at the bottom left of the screen.

That, then, is what the Konix console offers externally. It's a compact unit (about 15" deep and almost as wide) in tough plastic and superbly designed. In fact, most people do a double-take when they see it with the steering column raised since it's hard to believe that anyone could fit a mother-board inside, but then that's the other side of the story. See the panel on the right for full details.

BACK TO REALITY

It's very easy to get carried away by the Konix's specifications, particularly when reading through them for the first time. When you sit down and work out exactly what's going on you realise that, while unquestionably powerful, the ASIC has to do a hell of a lot. The DSP in particular must generate sound and perform 3D transformations. Neither are light on pro-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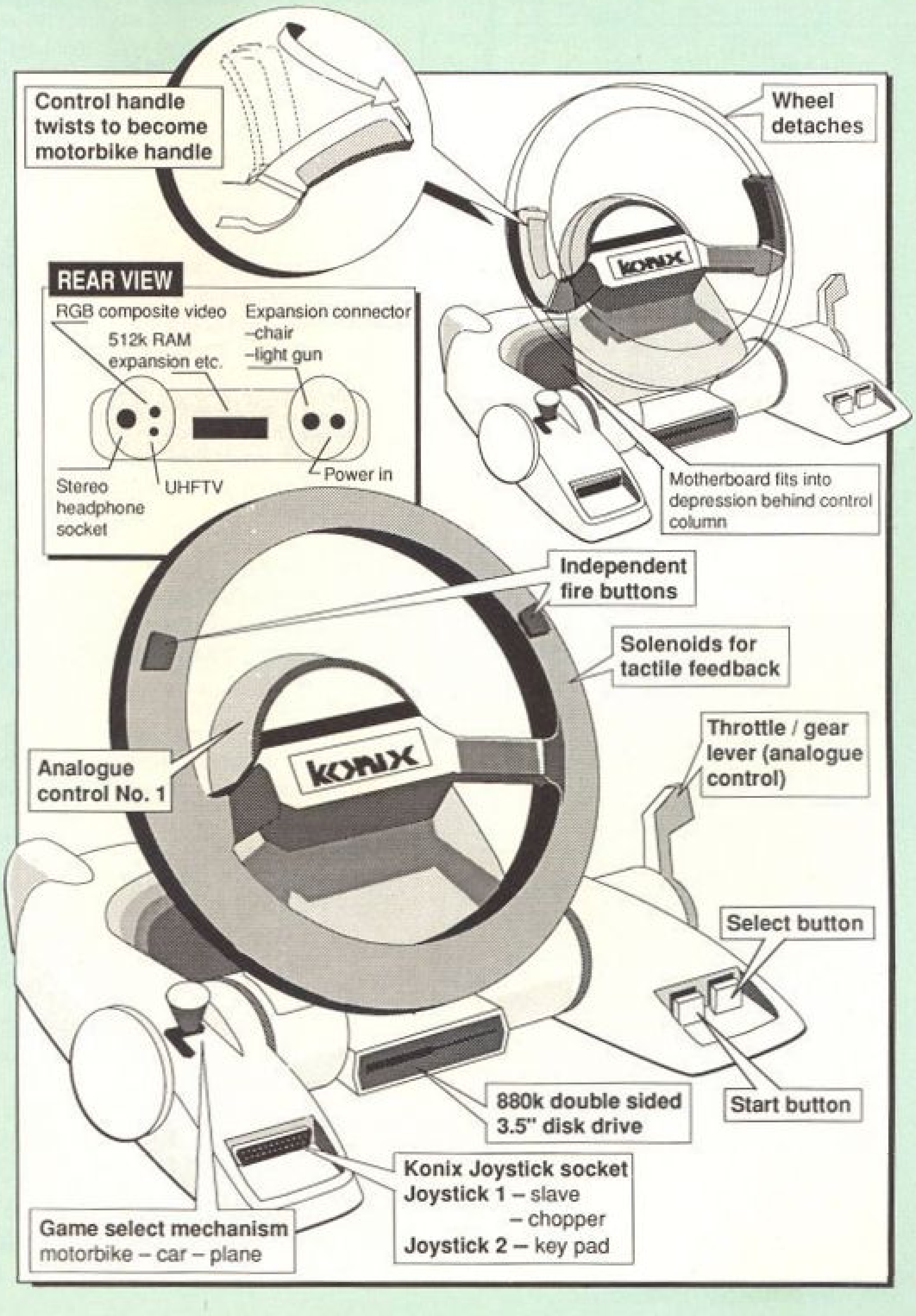
***Ninja II* looks like it is going to clean up on consoles even more than it did on home computers. System 3 boss Mark Cale is ecstatic about his new deal to launch the game for the Nintendo. With potential sales of a million units in America and the fact that the design of the Ninja game is ideally suited to consoles he has every right to be. Meanwhile, *Ninja II* on the Konix looks stunning. More colours on-screen, blindingly fast action, and superb graphics make it a visual and gameplaying treat. Let's hope all Konix software is like this!**


Control handle twists to become motorbike handle
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Expansion connector –chair –light gun
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Motherboard fits into depression behind control column
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Solenoids for tactile feedback
Analogue control No. 1
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Throttle / gear lever (analogue control)
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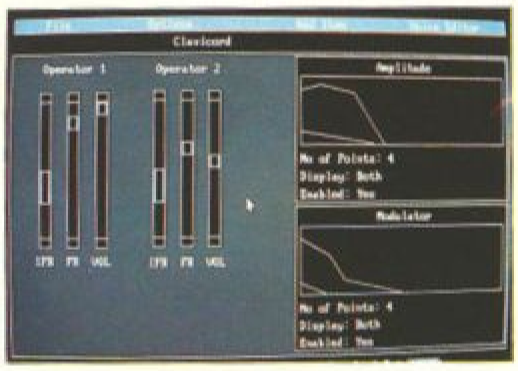

No of Points: 4
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Sound control: current sound generation software is still quite primitive as far as graphical presentation is concerned, but the results are very impressive, especially where samples are concerned.

cessor time. The various timings quoted so far only give an indication of what each component is capable of when nothing else is happening. A fully blown game might only use 16 colours on screen to reserve memory, the DSP would have to be restricted to producing three or four-channel sound and the number of polygons that could be rotated would be brought down to around 50 a frame.

The Konix console is in its infancy; the first games to appear won't stretch the hardware – and may not use the control mechanism to it full – and will probably look and feel little better than something on an ST or Amiga. In fact, several programmers are porting graphics across from existing 16-bit machines. But don't despair, if the Konix is capable of looking and sounding as good as an Amiga now, imagine what you'll be playing in six months time.

And the price? Still not fixed as we went to press, but a tad over £200, with the first machines in the shops over the three months.

THE ACE VERDICT

Although more expensive than when first announced, currently due to be priced at 'over £200', the Konix could make a very attractive this Christmas. In the mid-term, the only competing machines are likely to be the Sega 16-bit machine or the Fujitsu FM Towns, neither of which is planned for sale in the UK until next year (if at all).

The Konix is British, superbly designed, and extremely powerful. Provided the software base shapes up, we have no hesitation in recommending it. The company expect demand to outstrip supply before Christmas, so if you see one on the shelf, think twice before passing by...

PROGRAMMERS SPEAK

The Konix has received mixed reactions from the software industry – perhaps a reflection of our British tendency to slag off anything we do well. From the beginning, however, Mark Cale of System 3 has emerged as chief Konix evangelist. Chiding less enthusiastic members of the UK software trade Cale rails ' They are being ***** to him (Wyn Holloway, boss of Konix). What do they want? Do they want the Japanese to completely take over the business and dictate to us what we can publish, where we can publish it , and how many units we are allowed to sell'

All firms that sign up to do a game for the Multi System pay £2,000 for a development kit. The money is payed back as soon as the game is delivered. Duplication of the disks is handled by Konix themselves with a guarantee of zero piracy thanks to a built in security device. No restrictions are placed on developing the Konix title for other systems if the software house so desires – unlike Nintendo, for example, who insist any title developed for their games console must be theirs and theirs alone.

This is all multi-channel music to the ears of the software developers. But there is a fly in the silicon. If the machine is so marvellous why does it need conversions from lesser machines to prove its worth? Where is all the original Konix software? The answer is that the 'Konixisity' of the titles will still shine through. Ocean's Run The Gauntlet for example utilises the Multi System's variety of controls – with the player changing from steering wheel, to joystick, to flight controls to drive the various craft that the player must handle in the game.

Argonaut's Bikers – which will be packed with the Konix has also been designed specifically for the powerful driving manoeuvrability of the Multi System controller. Argonaut are also working on a version of Starglider II – code-named 'Revenge of Starglider'- again specifically coded to make the most of the Konix helicopter controller. Check out the Software Schedule box for other titles under development...

Meanwhile, the big boys in software publishing are strangely quiet on the subject. Rod Cousens, boss of Activision, told ACE 'We have a publishing relationship with Vivid Images.. so in a sense we are involved in Konix development' Cousens hopes that the Konix will succeed 'We wish them well. Conceptually the machine is excellent' But this excellence has not been sufficient for Activision to convert any of their own label titles for the machine. Despite the good wishes Cousens states 'Nó Activison titles are currently under development for the Konix'. At US Gold Geoff Brown states firmly that there are no current plans for the company to develop Konix games. But Konix software manager Jon Dean remains confident. 'Our aim is to have twenty four quality titles available for the Multi System within twelve months of launch.'

***Nick Speakman**, spokesman for Binary Design*

There's no question that the custom chips are very powerful, but they require a lot of programming talent to get anything out them. The screen handling isn't as fast as we anticipated it to be. But then when something is hyped out of all proportion it never is as good as you expect it to be – take *Batman*, for example.

***Jeff Minter**, LLamasoft*

I can't see major coin-op conversions like *R-Type* being particularly well implemented on the Konix. You want to interact with the machine's superb game controls, not just waggle some joystick.

***Brian Pollock**, Logotron*

My only concern is memory, or lack of it. For instance, in the game I'm writing I am using six-channel FM synthesised sound. Now that takes up a hell of a lot of memory. I couldn't usefully fit any more samples, and that's sad.

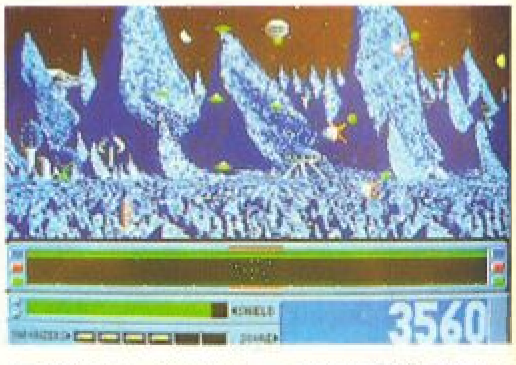
***Chris Walsh**, Argonaut*

Polygon-based games like Starglider II are going to be easy to program. The machine is geared up to rotating masses of vertices and incredible rates. It's as though the designers of the machine were obsessed with producing something that could shift polygons quickly.

SOFTWARE SCHEDULE

Here's a short checklist of games currently under development for the Konix and due to appear before the beginning of 1990.

Bikers (comes free with the console),	Argonaut
Konix Chess	Konix
Manchester United FC	Krysalis
Mr Do's Wild Ride	Electrocoin
Revenge of Starglider (working title)	Argonaut
Rotox	Binary Design
Run the Gauntlet	Ocean
Sailing Simulator	ODE
Starray	Logotron
Super Ski Simulator	Microids
Tunnel of Doom (working title)	ATD
Vendetta	System 3



Logotron's Starray – screenshot shows the current state of development of the Konix version. We can't wait!

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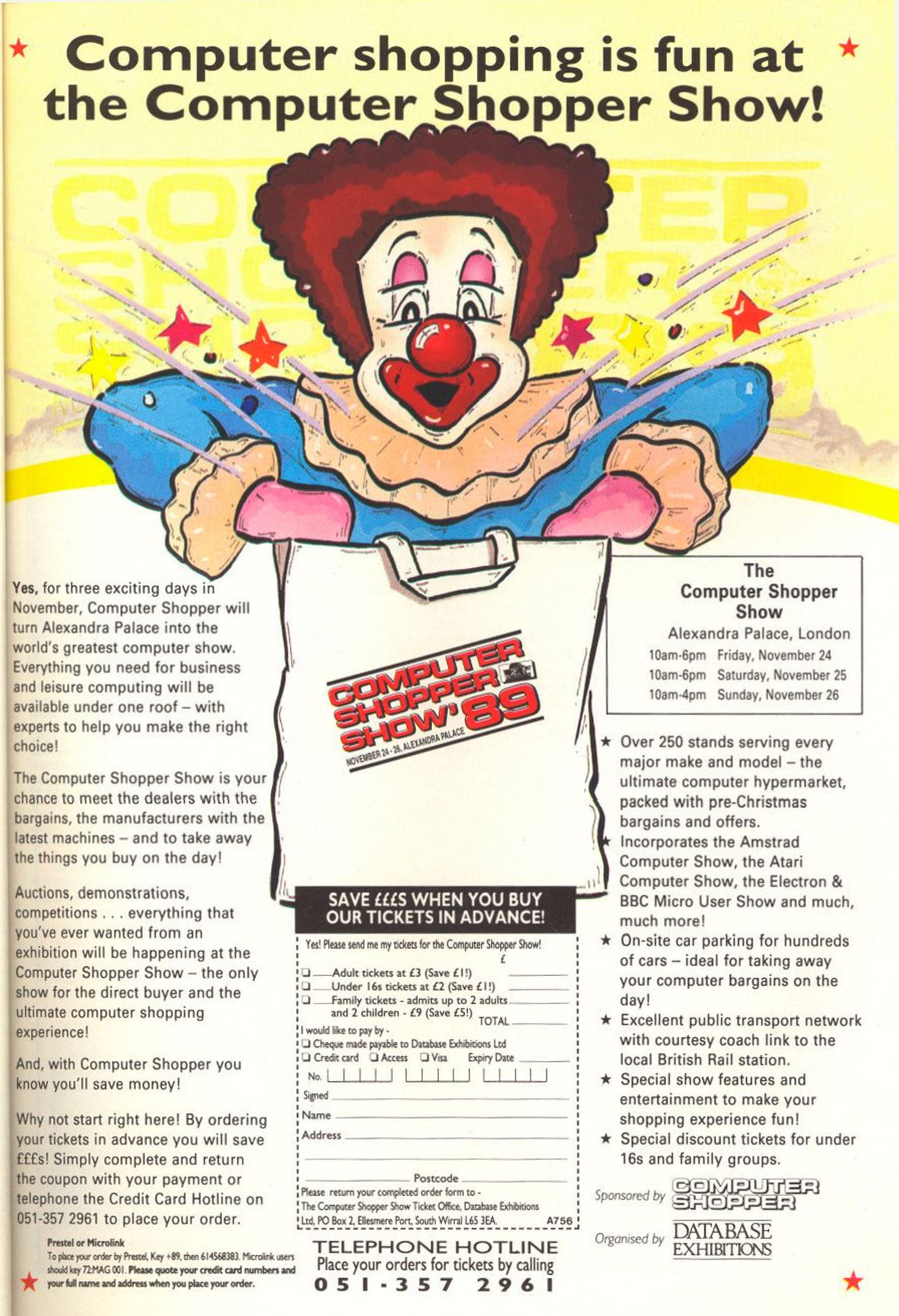

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GAMES GET MEAN...

ACE DEBATES THE RECENT ADVANCES IN PROGRAMMING POWER

Readers' letters over the last few issues have been suggesting that games are getting too difficult, flight sims too complex, RPG's too unfriendly. In a world where even Chess Grandmasters have to resign in the face of mighty silicon opponents, have the programmers left the players behind? Andy Wilton visits the Computer Olympiad and asks whether might is right...

Okay, what's the oldest computer game in the world? If you think it's *Space Invaders*, *Pong* or *PacMan*, you aren't even close. If you plump for *Adventure* or *Star Trek* you're still miles out. If you reckon it's chess on the other hand, award yourself two pawns and a pat on the back. Computer chess pre-dates those other games by so long it just isn't funny.

Computers were taking on humans across that black-and- white board in the 1950s, and the building blocks were laid even earlier. Incredible as it may seem, the principles of computer chess were first set out by Professor Claude Shannon, an American mathematician, over 40 years ago. Shannon presented his paper 'Programming a Computer for Playing Chess' at a conference in New York back in the spring of 1949. To put that in perspective, the atom bomb was five years old at the time, while AT&T had just invented something called a 'transistor'.

All modern chess programs are based on the ideas in that 1949 paper, but this doesn't mean standards of play have stood still. There have been huge improvements in programming techniques since the '40s, and astronomic leaps in hardware power - that 'transistor' came in quite handy! - so the same basic structure of program can now play a very mean game indeed. Prof Shannon had the chance to gauge this progress for himself last month, when he presented the winners' medals at the 1st Computer Olympiad.

A grand tournament of computer game-playing programs from around the world, the Olympiad drew an impressive 85 silicon contestants to the ballroom of London's Park Lane Hotel. Chess was by no means the only game in town: there were contests in a dozen other boardgames, from friendly old backgammon to the formidable full-sized Go, plus some fierce competition for bridge and dominoes medals.

All this gives the world's top boardgame programmers a chance to compare notes, discuss techniques and above all test their creations against the toughest (computer) opposition going. At the 1st Olympiad the results weren't always to their liking, as it turned out: every night of the week-long contest, teams of programmers worked late into the night trying to fine-tune their entries. Some programs made alarming leaps in performance from one day to the next, as the pressure of competition showed up embarrassing but fixable weaknesses.

Apple Macintosh and Acer PC do battle in the 19x19 Go tournament. The formidable game of strategic insight proved a bit too much for the UK teams: they placed seventh and tenth in a field of ten.

TAKE THE MONEY

This will to win isn't just the computer equivalent of Olympic spirit – there are frighteningly large sums of money at stake here. The Go competition, for example, also served as the European heat of Acer's World Computer Go Championship, an event with a great deal of prize money attached. As well as bursaries for travel to the Taipei finals, Acer have offered a mind-numbing US$1.4 Million for the first computer Go system to beat a human champion.

Nobody's offering that kind of cash for a similar chess achievement, but in a way the potential financial rewards here are even greater. The leading contenders, it transpires, were all computer prototypes for future versions of commercial chess machines. The incentive to win was obvious: beat the competition in the Olympiad, and you can have the result on your adverts when the finished machine goes on sale. The contest went all the way to the wire, with the Dutch *Rebel* grabbing gold. The dead heat for silver was eventually resolved in favour of the Anglo-German *Mephisto*, with Fidelity taking bronze back home to the States. If you want to buy shares in a few chess machine companies, look no further.

YES, BUT WHY?

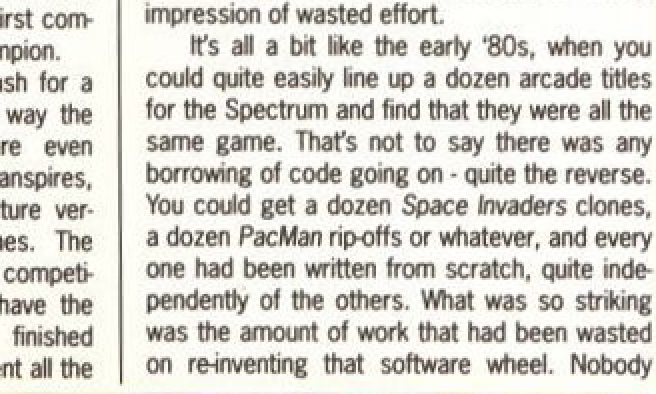
Money is one thing, but most of the contestants are in it for more complex reasons, and it's here that we start to stumble across the power-programming mentality that spills over into the games market, with possibly undesirable effects. We're talking about competition here: the possibility that you can actually test your programming abilities in a fair contest against a worthy opponent. Computer chess intrigues the man in the street because it lets him engage a machine in mental combat: it intrigues a programmer, on the other hand, because it lets him engage other human beings in mental combat. This is all very well, but although there's a fascination for the onlooker at the Olympiad, the novelty soon wears off, and in its place some more depressing thoughts crop up. Watching a dozen chess programs slug it out, you're left with a strong impression of wasted effort.

It's all a bit like the early '80s, when you could quite easily line up a dozen arcade titles for the Spectrum and find that they were all the same game. That's not to say there was any borrowing of code going on - quite the reverse. You could get a dozen *Space Invaders* clones, a dozen *PacMan* rip-offs or whatever, and every one had been written from scratch, quite independently of the others. What was so striking was the amount of work that had been wasted on re-inventing that software wheel. Nobody

SOFT BUT STRONG

The Olympiad is very definitely about software rather than hardware. In fact, there's no standard hardware set-up for contestants to use in the Olympiad, so a list of the machines entered makes interesting reading. About half of them were PC clones manufactured and supplied by the events sponsors, the Acer Corporation of Taiwan. The others ranged from creaky old 8- bit micros like the Dragon and Atari 800XL up to state-of- the-art Sun workstations, with the middle ground made up mostly of STs, Apple Macintoshes and - in surprisingly large numbers - Acorn's 32-bit Archimedes.

With a spread as wide as that you'd expect there to be some kind of handicapping system, but in fact the organisers didn't feel one was necessary. 'It's true that both of the Suns did win their respective tournaments,' explained the Olympiad's creator David Levy. 'That was down to software rather than hardware though: I'm quite sure those programs would have won whatever they were running on.' You might still feel that the SUN's purpose-designed SPARC processor had a little bit to do with those victories, easily outstripping the Archie's blistering ARM chip as it does, but hardware power really isn't everything. Victory in the Renju (a bit like zero-gravity Connect Four) went to a Soviet program running on that Dragon: nothing creaky about the software, it seems.

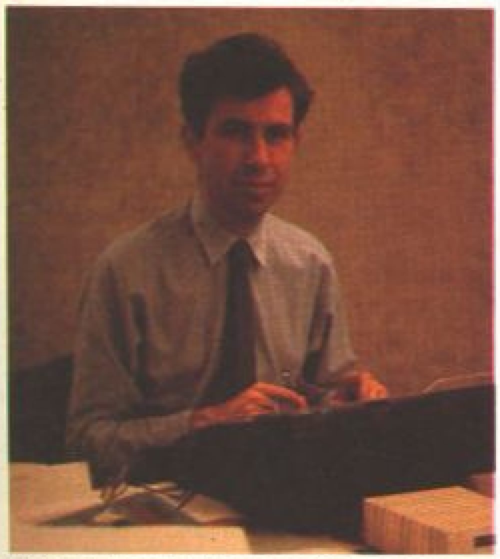


Mine's running on a Commodore 64...What's yours on?

needs a dozen *PacMan* games: if they're all competently written then any one of them would do.

Since the average amateur chess player could be soundly beaten by 90% of the computer chess games on the market, it seems like there's a *PacMan*-style glut here. *Rebel* may well be better than *Mephisto*, but if *Mephisto* can annihilate you at five seconds a move, the difference is really a bit academic.

Of course, that argument's not entirely fair as applied to the Computer Olympiad contestants. After all, a competition like that has nothing to do with usefulness. To take an athletic analogy, if you need a piano moved it doesn't really matter whether you get a silver-medal weightlifter to do it or the guy that beat him for the gold. Either bloke is strong enough for practical purposes, but that's irrelevant as far as weightlifting fans are concerned: they want to see which one can lift more, even if the difference is only a few bags of sugar.



Computer Olympiad's creator, David Levy, made a bet in 1968 that no computer could beat him in a chess match within ten years. In 1978 he collected the money - #1250 - after seeing off Northwestern University's formidable Chess 4.1. Things have come a long way since then: Levy reckons computer chess will be on a par with human champions in 20 or 25 years. So will he be taking any more large bets from now on? "I won't even be taking any small ones," he replies.

There's nothing wrong with this competition mentality if it's kept where it belongs - in competitions, that is - but unfortunately it does stray over into mainstream gaming. How many chess games are advertised on the basis of the strength of their game or the size of their opening book? Almost all of them, of course. Words like 'strength' sound good, don't they? The thing is, 'strength' here really means 'difficulty'. Those adverts are effectively saying 'buy our game because it'll thrash you hollow.' Would you buy a shoot-em-up if it was guaranteed to wreck you on anything past level 1?

Even if you look at it from the technological point of view, there are still shortcomings. That all-powerful chess program may be in its element in competition with other chess programs but for the rest of us it's still another chess program. Again, would you buy yet another shoot-em-up simply because it boasts more sampled sound than ever before? Or more colours on-screen? The sad truth is that you might, because thea't what the market is throwing at us right now, but let's not forget that colours and sound are no good without gameplay...

BRANCHING OUT

With the exception of *Scrabble*, all the boardgames played at the Olympiad are two-player, zero-sum games. 'Zero-sum' here means that whatever's bad for one player must be good for the other and vice versa. (Not all games are zero-sum: in *Balance of Power* a nuclear war is bad for both players. In zero-sum games the players' interests are utterly opposed, and any sacrifice is justifiable provided your opponent suffers more than you do.)

Leaving aside backgammon, the games are also all games of 'perfect information': that is, both players can see the complete state of the game and neither has anything 'up his sleeve'. *Tank Attack* is a game of imperfect information - you can see where enemy units are but not how strong they are - while the simultaneous orders of *Diplomacy* make the game similarly unpredictable. Random elements are the most common reason for imperfect information, hence the exclusion of backgammon.

These similarities mean that, despite the differences in rules, the games are all programmed in much the same way. In each case, the computer works out the best move by considering ways that the board could look after several moves have been made. It mentally makes every possible move from its current position, every reply its opponent could make and so on, searching for a 'continuation' (series of moves) that leaves it in the best position possible. In doing this the program assumes that both it and its opponent make the best moves available to them - that each tries to improve its own position at the other's expense, in other words. This 'If I do what's best for me and he does what's best for him...' process is called a minimax search. Along with alpha-beta pruning - a way of reducing the time wasted on bad moves - minimax searching is the backbone of two- player games programming.

Tournament rules and human patience put limits on the time a computer can spend on this search. The 'deeper' a program can search (the more moves it can look ahead from the current position), the better it will play, but deep searches take much longer. The crucial factor here is the 'branching factor' of the game under consideration: that is, the typical number of moves available to a player. Where a game has a low branching factor - less than 10, say - the program can expect to look as many as a dozen moves into the future. Larger branching factors force the program to make do with a shallow search, and thus play a poorer game.

SOME EXAMPLES:

CHESS

With a medium to high branching factor - a chess player typically has over 30 moves open to him - this game can't easily be analysed in depth. However, it's essential to look a long way ahead where pieces are being swapped rapidly, so most chess programs concentrate on these, and only take a shallow look at quieter positions. This key idea, since spread to most capture-based boardgames, was the central plank of Shannon's argument back in 1949.

DRAUGHTS

On an 8x8 board in particular, draughts has a low enough branching factor for quite deep searches. Even on the larger continental (10x10) and Canadian (12x12) boards, the rules on compulsory capture tend to limit a player's available moves quite drastically. As a result, modern draughts programs tend to be quite strong in human terms.

SHOGI

Played on a 9x9 board, this chess-like Japanese game is greatly complicated by the ability to 'drop' captured pieces - that is, to put them back anywhere you like on the board and use them against their original owner. Once you've captured a few pieces, potential 'drop' moves alone can run to several hundred at any one time. With conventional board moves as well, this gives a huge branching factor and makes intelligent computer play very difficult. Shogi was not represented at the Olympiad. The Japanese either didn't know about it or weren't interested. With such a serious language barrier it was difficult to tell which, Olympiad organiser David Levy explained.

GO

Fiendishly complex as it is, the Japanese don't rate Shogi as a truly intellectual game: for that they have the far more difficult *Go*. Played on a 19x19 board or in cut-down form on a 9x9 board, *Go* is all about surrounding and thereby gaining ownership of territory. Players take it in turn to place 'stones' - the game's uniform, featureless playing pieces - on the board's grid, gradually building up areas of control. It's subtle, very strategic and - with a branching factor that starts in the hundreds - extremely difficult to program. Again, there were no Japanese entries at the Olympiad but Taiwan had several: unlike Shogi, *Go* is also played in the Chinese-speaking world, under the name of Wei- Chi. Oddly enough the medallists on the full-size board were Polish, Dutch and Swiss, with the strongest Taiwanese program relegated to fifth place.

As for the challenge of a tough game, you can always turn down the difficulty when you find the game's too hard - but in that case, what was the point in having that strength there in the first place? Wasn't it just a red herring? Getting back to chess, take the extreme case of a leading dedicated machine, the Novag Super Expert. Raymond Keene, one of the Olympiad's organisers, recently played 59 games against the Super Expert: he won 40 of them, drew 7 and lost 12. Raymond Keene is an International Chess Grandmaster. If the

This US entry, Neurogammon, did have one slight advantage in the backgammon competition: it was running on a hyper-fast Sun workstation! There may not be any steroids in computer athletics, but Sun's reduced instruction-set SPARC chips come pretty close.

Super Expert took 12 games off him, how many casual players are going to use even a fraction of its power? The time is rapidly approaching where all the normal man in the street can do is pray for a 'System Error', or resign...

SO WHAT?

This drive for the ultimate chess-playing program stopped benefitting us mere mortals some years ago, but that's not the whole point. More importantly, there are plenty of other games that the wasted programming effort could be applied to. It's like that *PacMan* clone business: what was so painful about that duplication of effort was the way it took up resources that were badly needed elsewhere. All those programmers with the know-how to handle sprites, sound and collision detection were wasting their time copying an existing standard when they could have been creating original games. If you take a dozen *PacMan* look-alikes, you're actually looking at eleven missed opportunities for original, interesting gameplay.

A WHOLE NEW BOARDGAME?

What we need is a bit of that chess effort redirected to other promising games, or even new game designs altogether. Why, for instance, doesn't someone program and sell a micro version of Chinese Chess, or its Japanese counterpart Shogi? Why aren't the shops full of *Colossus Go* or *Sargon Awari*? It's true that these games lack the ready-made UK market of chess or bridge - the droves of people who already play the games in their wooden or cardboard forms - but that shouldn't stop software houses making money out of them. After all, the only Shogi game on the market would surely do better than an average-selling Chess game.

There's no need to go that far afield for suitable games. Over in the States at the moment, the Amiga game *Distant Armies* is building itself a following among chess buffs. It's actually a compendium of chess variants and precursors, starting with the ancient Indian game Shaturanga and working across the Middle East (and Middle Ages) to the European form settled on as a world standard today. It's easy to understand the appeal of these games: while they're similar enough to modern chess to be easily learnable, they're different enough to make you work out your own strategies. In particular they discard the tedious 'opening book' learning - ancient Persian books on Shatranj are rare things indeed! - making casual play far more rewarding. Wouldn't you rather rely on skill than parrot-learning?

If programs like *Distant Armies* catch on in a big way, it won't be the first time money's been made out of resurrected games. Probably the world's most programed boardgame after chess is the one that Japanese game moguls Anjar Company Inc market under the name Othello. Under its original name of Reversi the game did moderately well in late-Victorian England, but with its new name and some heavy marketing those distinctive flip-over discs made Anjar an absolute fortune. How many other equally good but now forgotten games could do just as well? Mark my words, someone could yet make a killing out of Faerie Chess!

As for new game designs, purpose-written boardgames are just as promising for computer success. Take Mastertronic's excellent 16-bit think-em-up *Infection*. While it's childsplay to learn the rules of the game, figuring out a water-tight set of tactics could take months. For a simple game, it really is terrifyingly addictive stuff. The same goes for Ariolasoft's *Think!*, a fascinating sliding-tile game re-released by Firebird Silver at a desperately reasonable £1.99. What's particularly striking about both games is the way that, simple though they both are, neither game would be really practical if played on an actual real-life board. The mechanism of colour transfer in Infection or of tile movement in *Think!* would be fiendishly difficult to implement outside a computer screen. (Oddly enough, you could say almost exactly the same thing about Reversi: turning over all those tiles is far easier on screen than in real life.)

GETTING PHYSICAL

Indeed, the future of computers as game opponents could well turn on their dual ability to act as playing opponents. Quite simply, you can present games clearly on screen that are difficult or impractical in life. An obvious example is the point in a chess game where one player has two queens on the board. In real life, players are forced to improvise with upside-down rooks. On screen it's the simplest thing in the world for the computer to create another queen, making the actual position on the board a good deal clearer.

Similarly the Japanese game Shogi looks confusing to Westerners because of the way both 'black' and 'white' sets of pieces are actually the same colour. This is essential in real life: Shogi pieces swap sides on capture so that, for instance, a black Lance may be taken and subsequently returned to the board as a white piece. A computer version of Shogi could colour the sets differently, changing colours automatically when pieces are captured.

Imagine how much more important this 'computer-as- board' factor could be for 3D games. The obvious way to play such games is with a 'stack' of boards mounted one above the other like tiers of a wedding cake. This is difficult enough to handle in real life with a game as small as noughts and crosses, but a stack the size you'd need for chess (8 high) or Go (19 high) would be something else again. Even seeing what was going on would be impossible, never mind trying to actually move the pieces. Imaginative 3D display techniques along with cross-sectional views in different planes could make solid chess or draughts games perfectly feasible in computer form, and moving pieces would be simplicity itself!

There's another important thing both *Infection* and *Think!* have in common: they are enormous fun in a way that no game of chess, draughts or backgammon could be for the average European or American gamesplayer. What's so great is the actual learning process. As understanding gradually dawns you can feel truly clever, knowing that you've hauled yourself up from total ignorance to beat that machine on its own terms. If you got the same buzz out of learning chess or draughts, the chances are you can hardly remember it now: with new purpose-written games you could get that same thrill of discovery time and again.

This doesn't apply just to think-em-ups either. Many of the games we play nowadays are becoming increasingly complex, difficult to play, and – at the same time – depressingly familiar. It's the same programmer versus player confrontation that you get in chess, but in the long run it's doubtful whether the player can ever win. Shoot-em-ups like *Blood Money* on the Amiga are both technically impressive and fiendishly difficult – both achievements that stand as testimony to the programmer's art – but the actual scenarios are often little different than a dozen other programs. Challenge (as Jim Laver points out on the letter pages this month) is obviously important, so is technical skill, but for the player that sense of discovery and excitement when confronted by the truly original is also essential. If game designers began to put as much effort into new scenarios as they do into technical achievement, we might all be the better for it...

This plucky British programming team crammed the complex game of Chinese Chess into a 48K Spectrum, but to no avail: the PC-based Taiwanese program next door stomped all over their brave little effort.

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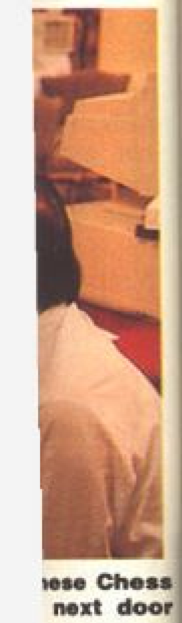

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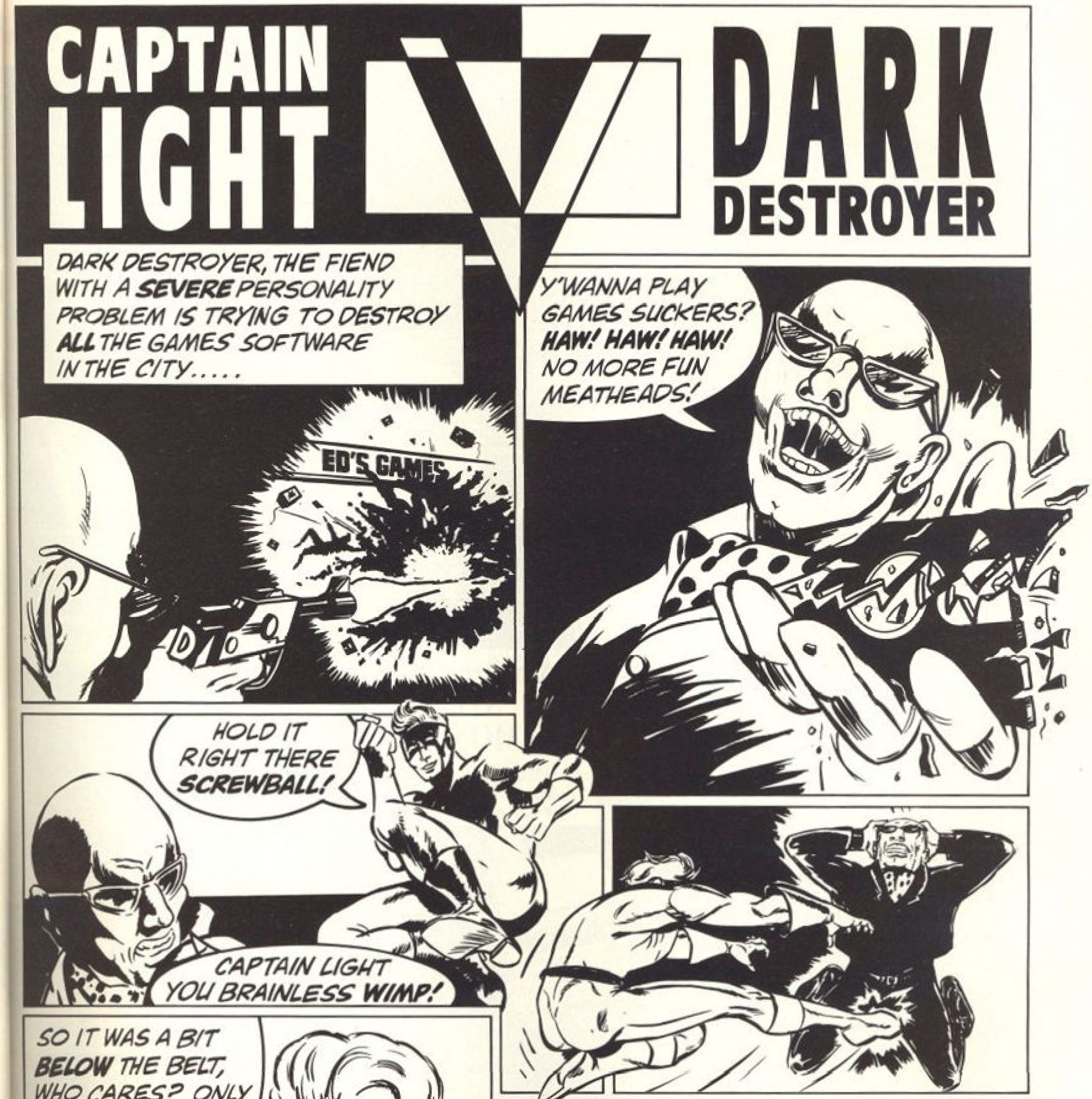
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SO IT WAS A BIT BELOW THE BELT, WHO CARES? ONLY TROUBLE IS, HE'S DESTROYED ALL THE GAMES SOFTWARE
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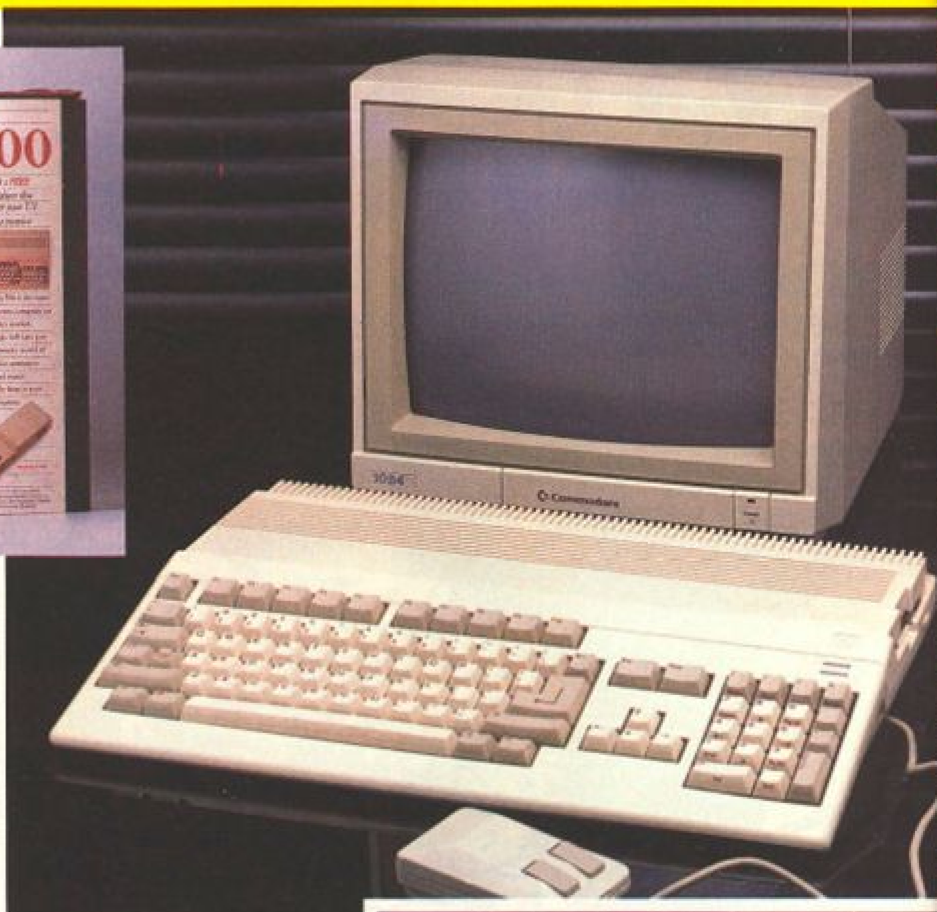

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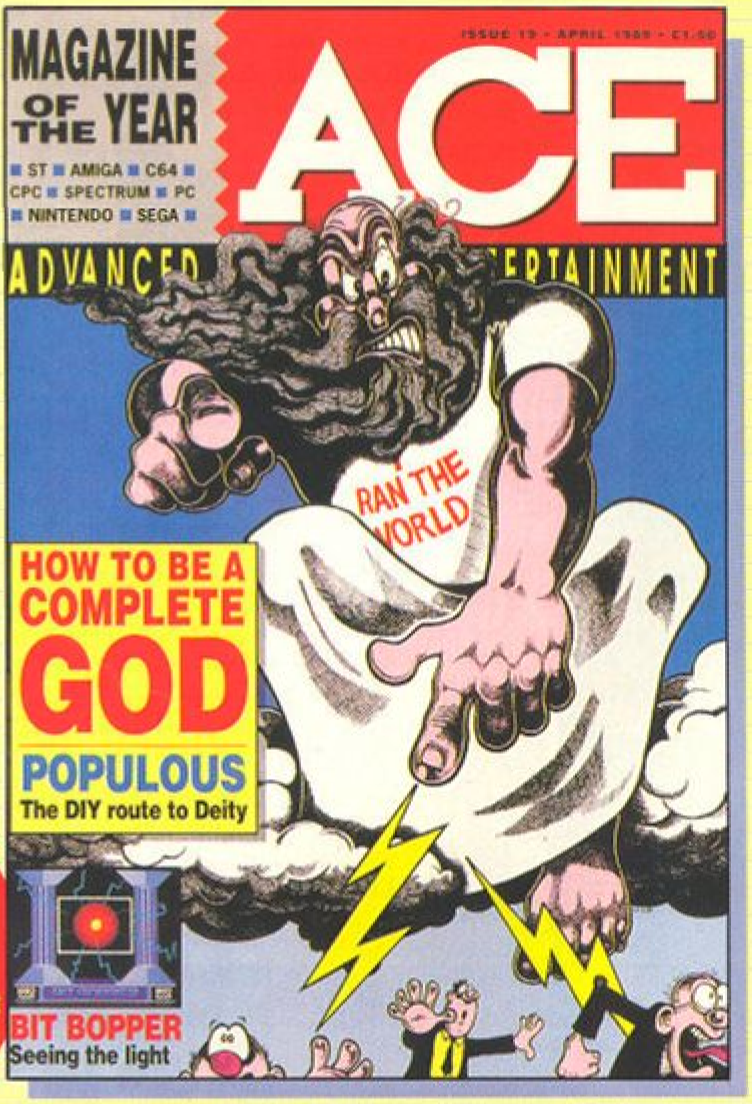
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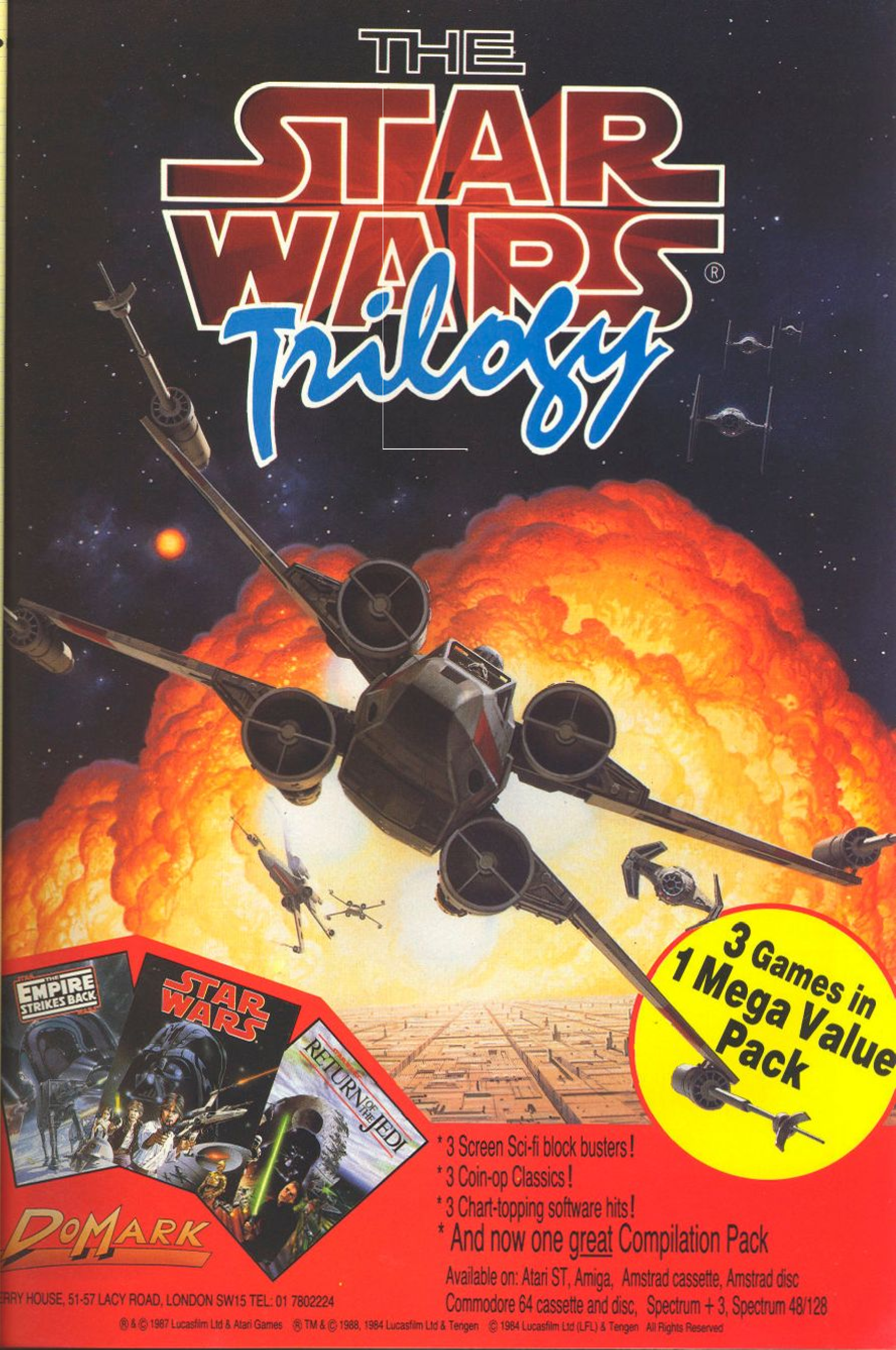
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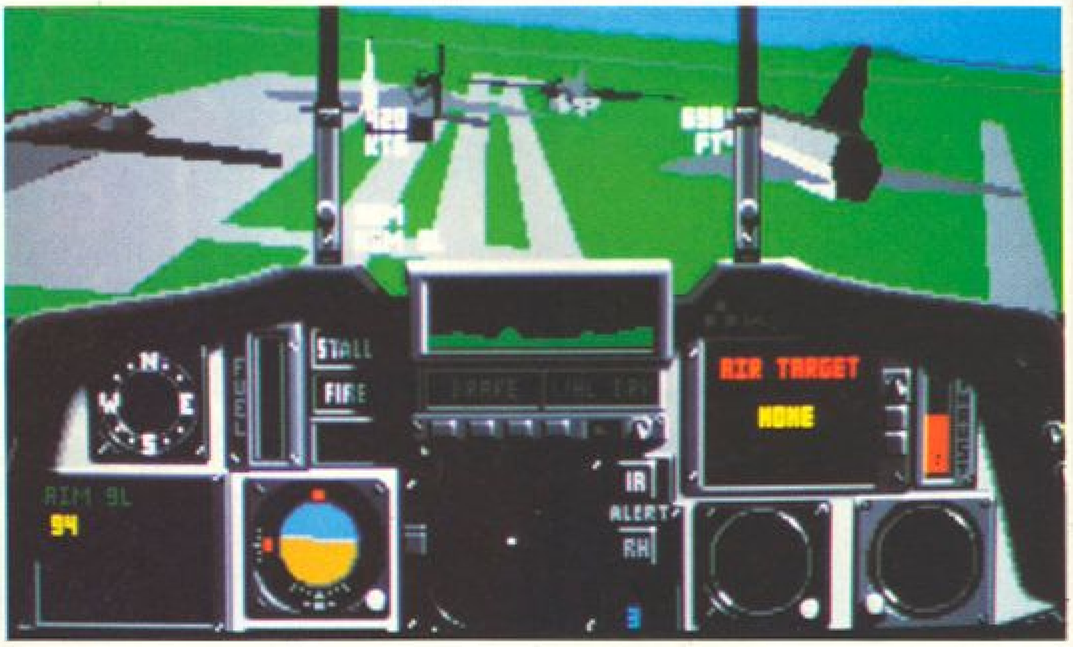
BOMBERS AWAY!

CHECK OUT THIS STUNNING NEW FLIGHT SIM – AND LEARN TO FL

When we heard that men who drive Rovers get more rumpy pumpy, we were intrigued but not too surprised. But when we discovered that Activision's new flight simulator was being programmed by the brilliant Vektor Graphics, we sent the brilliant Phil South straight up to Leeds to see it.



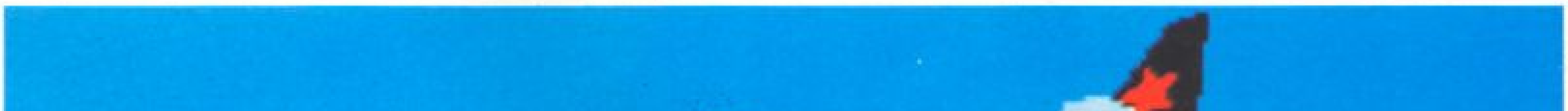
You've seen one flight simulator, you've seen them all, right? Well, no in fact, because not until I was invited up to see a preview of *Bomber* itself did I believe a computer could fly. Activision wanted it, so Vektor did it, because as you may or may not know, Vektor Grafix are one of the country's leading exponents of 3D computer graphics. They had the technology, so why not see what it can REALLY do. And they did.12 months ago the design was finalised, but still certain things needed doing to it. John Lewis, co-director of Vektor Grafix and designer of *Bomber* talked me through a few things that they wanted from *Bomber*. For a start they wanted round jets, round cannons and round wheels. Eh?

"Nobody does that, you know. I don't want to see flippin' hexagonal wheels. I'm a simulator fan and I want to see REALISM. None of this jerky movement and small amounts of polygons. I want round wheels, hundreds of polygons per object and smooth lifelike movement." And *Bomber* has it. The ability to move all around the 'world' that has been mapped inside the computer was essential. Freedom of movement around your aircraft is also a feature, allowing *Bomber* to show off all its smooth flying action.

"The trick with the design was finding a flight simulator angle that hadn't been done before. All the sims before have either been commercial, Lear jets and Cessnas, or they've been fighters. So I got thinking, the most of the really exciting modern jets are these multi-role combat aircraft. So you take aircraft like the Tornado, the F-111 and the Saab Viggen, stuff like that, nobody's done simulators of those.I thought it would be a great idea to concentrate on 'ground attack', but with air defense capability, which is what bombers are all about. They're all about carrying a great shipload of bombs to a target, bombing it, but then having the ability to escape at maximum speed. And that's brilliant 'cause you've got the best of both worlds."

All the aircraft in *Bomber* were chosen with this strategic low-level and air-to-air excitement in mind. The game features the British Tornado, German Tornado, F-4 Phantom, Saab Viggen, F-15 Strike Eagle, F-111, and a first for this program, the Russian MIG 27. This is the only chance you'll get to fly one of these, rather than just blow it out of the sky.

Like all the other aircraft in the game, you can switch planes mid-flight, refuel and run on preset missions, or even design your own for you or your friends to play. Every possible detail has been included, and any bit of any plane that can be animated has been, right down to the variable incidence wings and the



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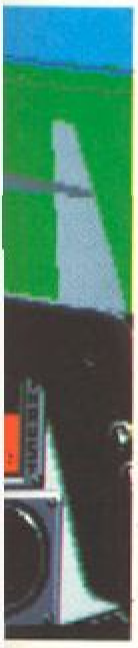

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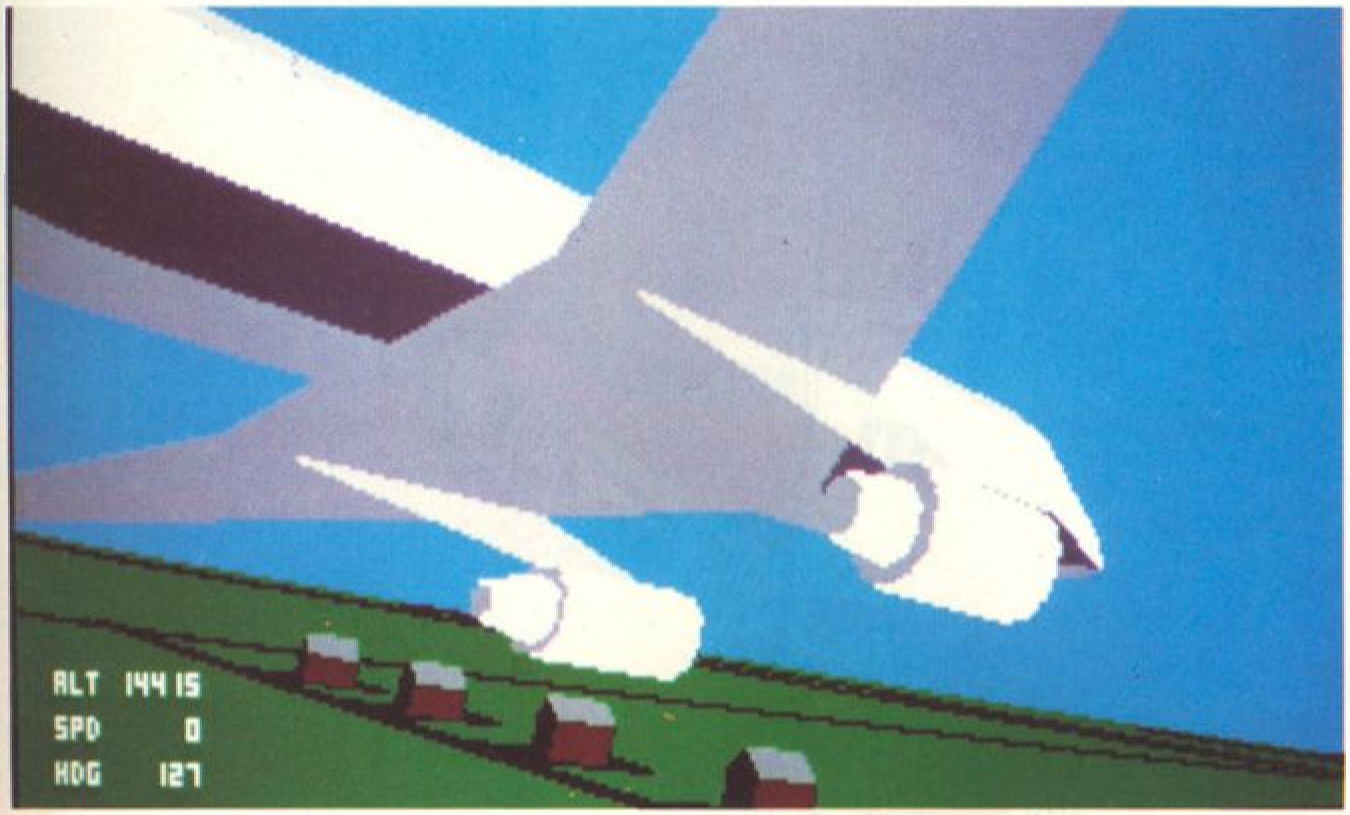


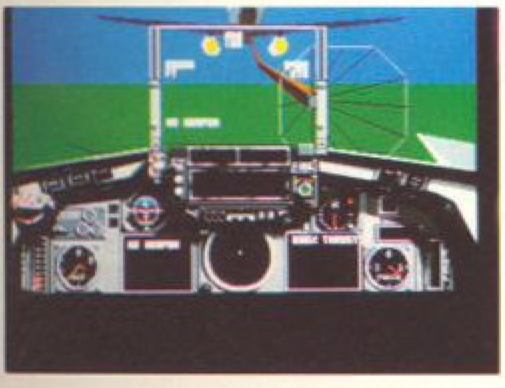
undercarriage. The team has really worked hard to bring you the best simulator ever.

The team around John and Andy producing the game are Ciaran Gultnieks (MS-DOS), Ian Martin (C64 and co-ST and Pete Featherstone (co-ST and Amiga), Carl Terry Spencer (Z80) Derek "Squiggly Erek" Austin (shape design and stripy shirt monitor), Mark Griffiths (support graphics) and Carl Logan (environment design). Carl is also working on a special natural language parser for future VG products. By the way, Derek is called "squiggly erek" because that's how he signs his name!

VEKTOR GRAFIX

A couple of years ago, John Lewis was working for another software publisher, and like most people he thought he could do better on his own. But quite unlike other people he actually did go it alone, or rather form a company with friend and programmer Andy Craven which produced its own product.

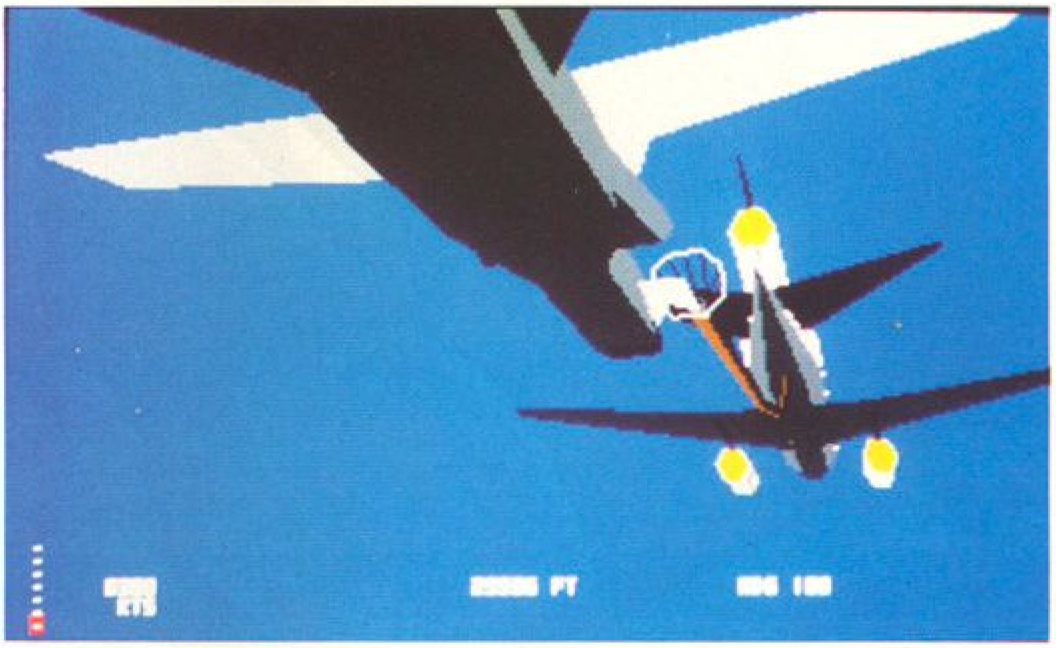
The move was prompted by the 3D graphics routines that Andy Craven and his friend Danny Gallagher had designed. "These guys came to me and showed me these amazing 3D vector graphics on the 8 bit machines." said John. "Totally blew everything else away, they did. What they'd done was basically the *Star Wars* game, and so when I heard that Domark had the license I knew we had to get together." And so the *Star Wars* game was born, and so was the fledgling Vektor Grafix. Andy ran the company while John still worked for this other publisher, but after the success of *Star Wars* and *Empire Strikes Back*, John quit his day job to join Vektor Grafix full time.



Since March this year, the firm has re-located into a brand spanking new converted brewery house in the centre of Leeds, and now also has 4 products for Activision in the works, of which *Bomber* is the first.

So what is the future for 3D graphics and Vektor themselves, John? "What I don't want to do is give away what we've got in mind. For those who can see beyond the obvious there are things that you can do, not moving away from the leisure area completely, but in serious computing there's an awful lot you can do with a powerful 3D graphics system."

So that's experimental work, but how about gaming? "Well there's a new idea we're working on, totally away from 3D work. It's more in the line of what you might call 'totally interactive movies'. Saying more than that would give too much away, but wait and see. Real soon now. The other thing is our development system, which we've written in association with our friends and neighbours in 3D, Real Time. It's called *SnAsm*, it runs on the PC and it's really dead good, and much better than *PDS*. We'll be launching it at the PC Show in September, so come along and have a look."



HERE'S YOUR CHANCE!!

We've got together with Activision and Vektor Grafix to bring you a superb prize competition. Ready? Well, when we were up talking to John Lewis, he mentioned that both he and Andy were taking Flying Lessons. Only in the interests of research, you understand. Don't think there's any FUN in it for them, oh no. So that's the deal. Answer these admittedly hard questions on military aviation, and you could win £600 worth of free flying lessons, plus a copy of Bomber for your computer. 20 runners up will also get a copy of the game.

Okay, here are the questions:

1. When was the first air transportable hydrogen bomb dropped and where?

2. Who first flew across the channel?

3. Which commercial airliner has a droopy nose??

Answers on a postcard before October 31st 1989 to: Bomber Competition, ACE, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. No employees of Activision, Vektor Graphics or Emap Business Publications may enter, and the editor's decision is final. Oh yes, and don't forget to mention what format you'd like the game on, okay? The flying lessons will, where possible, be arranged at a venue convenient for the winner, but some travel (at your expense) may be involved.

AT LAST . . . !!

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Commodore Amiga screenshot

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SCREEN TEST

PIC CURVE POWER

The PIC – Predicted Interest Curve – is the most sophisticated reviewing tool around. Here's why...

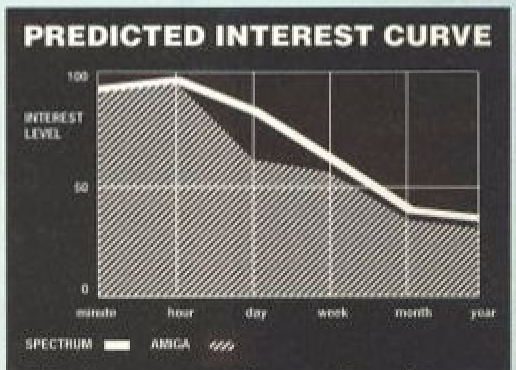
The curve is divided into six sections, indicating the player's adrenalin level after one minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month, and one year. But this tells you an awful lot than just what your interest level will be at any given time (although that's obviously important in itself)...

For example, a high one minute rating means that the game must look fantastic and get you all excited from the word go. That means it's probably a good game to show off to the neighbours – after all, they probably aren't going to pay attention for much more than a minute, after which they'll go back to drinking coffee and making rude remarks about 'those awful hostile games the boys play these days'.

The minute, hour, and day ratings can tell you a lot about a game too. If there's a dip here, followed by a rise, you've got a game that may take a bit of getting into – not recommended if you like to get down to something quick and easy. Alternatively, the graphics may put you off for a while until the gameplay starts to grip. Check out the PIC comment for more details.

Finally, you've got the month and year ratings. The better a game holds up here the more deserving it is of your hard earned cash.

PIC curve construction takes a lot of playing on the part of ACE reviewers. PIC curve analysis is an art in itself. The reward is knowing just what you're getting when you make the decision to splash out on *Mutant Macdonald Gettysburgers*....or *F15 Strike Eagle II* – just one of this month's excellent examples of today's software technology.



PICs give you more than a rating – they represent the entire life of a game...yes SIR!

This VGA graduated horizon is just one of the signs of technical innovation in flight simulators. Check out *F15 II* over the page...

DON'T FORGET THE UPDATES!

We don't just review the latest releases. We also check out conversions of old games onto new formats. So there could well be a recent conversion for YOUR machine...This month Updates are on pages 80-81.

THE ACE REVIEWING SYSTEM

PIC CURVES

This unique feature to the ACE reviewing system charts the interest level that a game stimulates over a period of time. The curve is accompanied by a comment to explain why it's the shape it is. Find out more in the Pic Curve Power panel on this page...

Each review also carries special 'Version Boxes' that give you details of the game's implementation on a specific machine. These boxes include ratings for...

GRAPHICS

All aspects of the game's graphics with the limitations of each machine taken into account. A good-looking Spectrum game will thereforee score higher than an average-looking Amiga one.

AUDIO

The music and sound effects are rated here. A high rating is possible on even limited machines like the Spectrum and PC if the computer's shortcomings are cleverly sidestepped.

IQ FACTOR

Yes, sometimes you have to use your brain. This rating evaluates the risk of mental effort – which some people actually enjoy...Note that ACE readers are generally reckoned to be more intelligent than other human beings, so the ratings may be lower than you expect...

FUN FACTOR

Basically a measure of mindless addictiveness. Games like *Arkanoid* and *Flying Shark* require virtually zero brain power but are still remarkably addictive. Most coin-ops score well here because they are designed for instant satisfaction. Games don't have to be *either* fun *or* intelligent – they can be both.

ACE RATING

This is not just plucked out of the air but is calculated from the area under the PIC Curve. To get a really high rating a game will not only have to be very addictive but stand the test of time as well. Just because a game does not get over 900 does not mean we are not recommending it – the following is a general guide to what the ratings mean.

900+ A classic game, recommended without reservation.

800-899 A superb game, but perhaps lacking the long-term depth to last into the month and year categories.

700-799 Still highly recommended, but probably has a couple of aspects to the gameplay that take the edge off it.

600-699 The 'fair' zone, where it tends to be very good 'if you like that sort of thing'.

500-599 This still has good things going for it, but the game clearly has some noticeable problems.

400-499 Problems with gameplay and programming make this an inferior game.

300-399 Not only is the gameplay bad but the design was probably flawed in the first place.

200-299 Things are getting really serious now...

100-199 ZX81 games running on an Amiga.

Under 100 Nothing has ever achieved this appalling level of rating. If anything ever does, it wouldn't even be worth having it for free.

VERSION BOXES

This covers version-specific information on graphics, audio, loading problems etc. If there's no box for your machine but a version is planned, it'll be covered as an update in a later issue.

THE TEAM

..includes *Steve Cooke*, one of the original editors of this award-winning magazine, known to thousands through his many other previous identities, including Zzap!'s White Wizard, The Pilgrim, and Old Baldy.

Eugene Lacey is the man who put Britain's top-selling games magazine, C&VG, on the map. Luckily for us, Eugene got fed up with writing for 8-year olds and decided the time had come to tackle thechallenge of ACE magazine. As one of Britain's most experienced games journalists, his word is LAW.

Claran Brennan should need no introduction. Formerly editor of Zzap! magazine, he's now deputy editor of The One and an honorary ACE reviewer.

Julian Rignall, formerly UK Coin Op champion, former editor of Zzap!64, and the man with his name on more hi-score tables on Brighton Pier than anyone else.

Mike Pattenden is the editor of Commodore User – so he ought to know what he's talking about when it comes to C64 stuff. But he knows a thing or two about the Amiga, and is no dummy when it comes to other machines either.

Mark Patterson has put in two and a half years of games slavery for Commodore User and C&VG and knows everything there is to know about RPGs.

We don't review anything until we are 100% certain that we've got it right. We've checked them out thoroughly – now you can too.

STRIKE EAGLE II

MICROPOSE spend a night at Sierra Hotel

POSSIBLY one of the most popular "adult" computer pastimes, computer generated flight simulations have come a long way from the early PSION *Flight Simulator* days, where you could get suitably enthralled by a row of dots in the shape of runway landing lights. In these enlightened days, when computer flight simulations are so advanced the USAF are using them to train pilots, you'd have to be clinically insane to want to release another title into a field with such abnormally high standards. Once again Microprose have managed not only to beat their previous best title, in this case *F-19 Stealth Bomber*, but have also come up with a worthy contender to Mirrorsoft's *Falcon*.

To clear up any confusion, *Strike Eagle II* is a flight/combat simulator that offers you the chance to fly simulated strike missions through a choice of war zones, ranging from Libya (an easy ride due to their outdated equipment) through the Persian Gulf and Vietnam to Europe (where you can quite easily become a sitting duck to the most effective defensive equipment there is).

In effect, *SE II* is an updated version of *F-19*. Indeed, the areas you fly over are identical to the aforementioned *F-19*, as are the enemy. The first real difference is that the plane is a lot more fun to fly. First off, you've got a lot more speed to play with, with the added fun of afterburners on board. Also due to its sleeker design, the F-15 is a lot more manoeuvrable than the cumbersome Stealth Bomber, which adds up to much more enjoyable combat. None of this nancy radar evasion for me.

Another thing that has been simplified is the weapons system. Unlike *Stealth Bomber*, you always carry the same payload of three types of weapon. AIM-120A AMRAAM medium range air-to-air guided missiles, AIM-9M Sidewinder short range air-to-air infra red homing missiles and AGM-65D Maverick air-to-ground attack missiles. Each can be readied for fire at the touch of a button, and selecting a weapon automatically selects the correct radar setting and enemy tracking mode. All three missiles are 'Fire and forget', meaning all you have to do is 'lock on' the missile to a certain enemy (keep tracking the enemy until it comes into range of the currently selected missile, at which point you are told a 'missile lock' is now effective) and press fire to launch the missile.

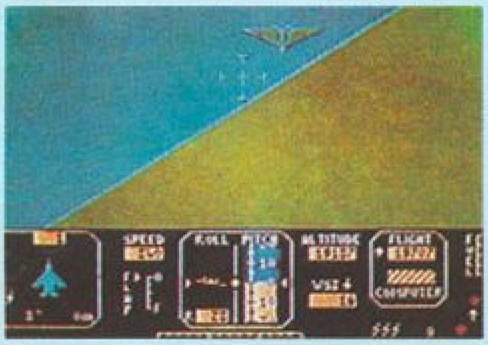
In CGA, EGA or Hercules, the game looks the same as F-19, which is no bad thing. Lots of multi-faceted filled vectors and the like, but in VGA or MCGA, this has to be the best looking flight simulator yet. Just the sheer variety of views alone are enough to warrant a high mark, with missile view, three sorts of external view, and the option to see yourself from your enemy's point of view. The best thing about it, however, is the incredible use of colour. If you remember *Archipelagos* on the Amiga, you'll recall the very clever misting effect on the horizon. *SE II* has that very same effect, and it is extremely effective. The feeling of depth is incredible. Add to that the brilliant sensation of speed and you've really got something.

Though maybe not as smooth as Velocity's *Jetfighter*, *F-15* is every bit as fast, and you really notice it on low-level flight. Easily the breathtaking effect is the missile view when you've launched something at the ground. The missiles fly much faster than your plane, so the speed in itself is exhilarating, but it's when the missile picks up speed and starts plummeting toward it's target...oh for a hydraulic chair!

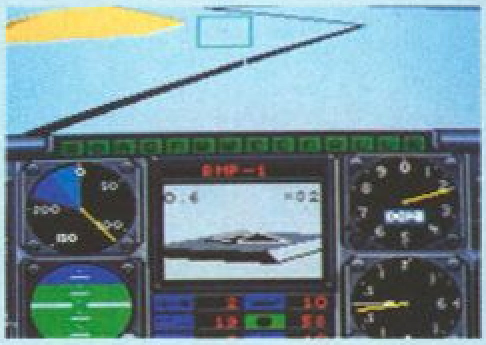
So why pick this over *Falcon*? In terms of being a flight simulator, *Falcon* has the edge, but even so, this is ideal for a beginner, as it's very easy to fly and it's a lot of fun. Also, experienced buffs are going to get a lot of fun out of this simply for the large number of missions involved and the variety of sceneries. In terms of accuracy, it may never match up to the might *Falcon*, but I can still see myself putting in more than a few hours on this one yet.

● Tony Dillon

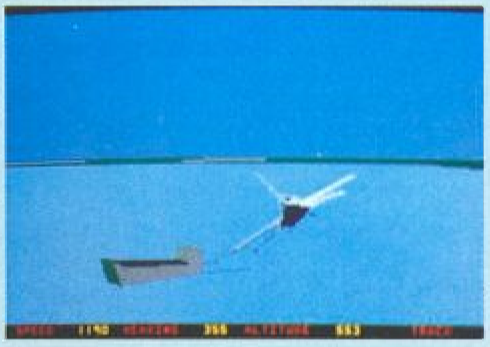
THE ROLL OF HONOUR



Fighter Pilot **– Spectrum**
One of the many Spectrum flight simulators to appear at that time, the only difference being that this one actually gave you decent combat. The scenery was simple: a few dots, yellow ground, blue sky and the enemy planes were merely triangles, but there was something really involving about that little D.I. battlefield.



Gunship **– C64**
Exciting helicopter combat action with amazingly fast filled vectors, especially for a C64. Microprose managed to fit in a heck of a lot onto one little 5 1/4" disk – five areas to fly through, an infinite amount of randomly generated missions, three different skill levels, dozens of different enemies and the ability to build a character, complete with medals and promotions, all awarded with a suitable full colour still picture. Still one of the best.



Falcon Mission Disk **– ST/Amiga**
The cream of the crop so far. After building the seemingly ultimate flight simulator, Mirrorsoft came up with not only a new battle field for you to fly over, but a whole war to fight single handedly protecting no less than three lines of defence while thwarting the oncoming invasion. Pretty heavy stuff, and all played out with some of the fastest filled vectors yet.

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● Tony Dillon

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PC VERSION

Incredible. The graphics are amazingly fast and the feeling of distance is enough to scare even the least agrophobic amongst us. Add to that variety of gameplay and enough challange to keep you coming back and you've got yourself a regular addition to the pink pages.

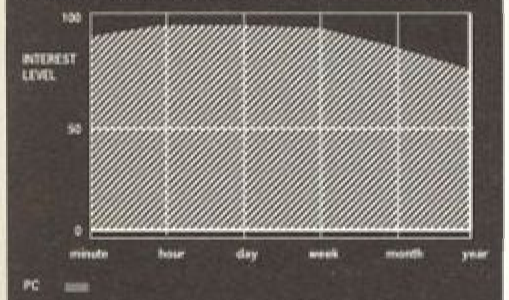
GRAPHICS	**9**	**IQ FACTOR**	**8**
AUDIO	**7**	**FUN FACTOR**	**9**

ACE RATING 912

RELEASE BOX

IBM PC	£34.95dk	OUT NOW
OTHER VERSIONS	TBA	

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Takes almost no time at all to get wrapped up in this synthetically created universe, but once you're in, you've just got to keep fighting.

TECHNO PORN!

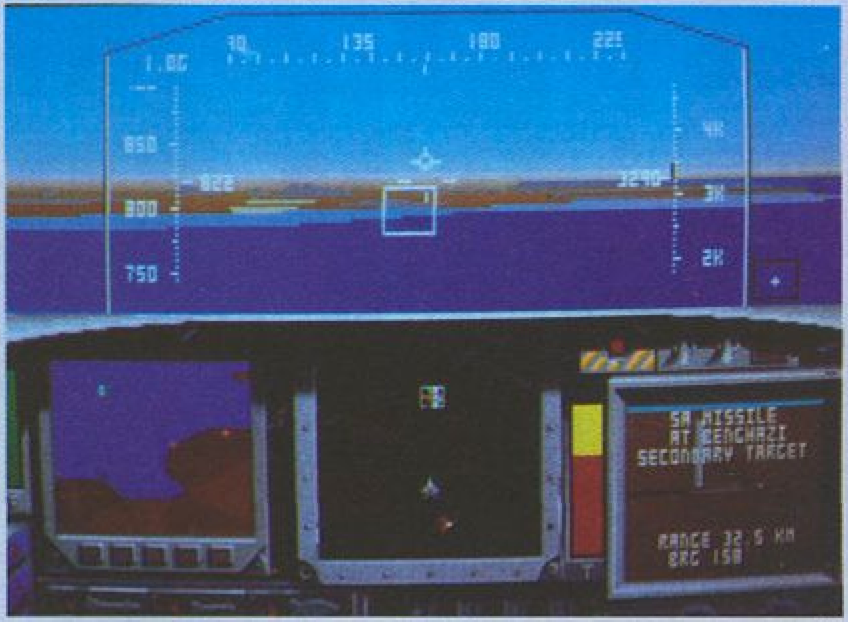
OK, so just how fast is this beast? Well, you can check the frame rate for whatever machine you are running on as follows. Hit the ALT and F keys, which will print the number of Jiffies per 4 frames on the HUD. Take this number and divide it by the Hz rate of your graphics card; 60 Hz for EGA and CGA, 50 Hz for Hercules Mono, and 70 Hz for MCGA. This gives you seconds per frame. Invert it and you will get frames per second for your machine configuration. Nifty, eh?

The memory taken varies from machine to machine. On a Tandy it takes 384K of memory while on an MCGA machine it takes 512k.

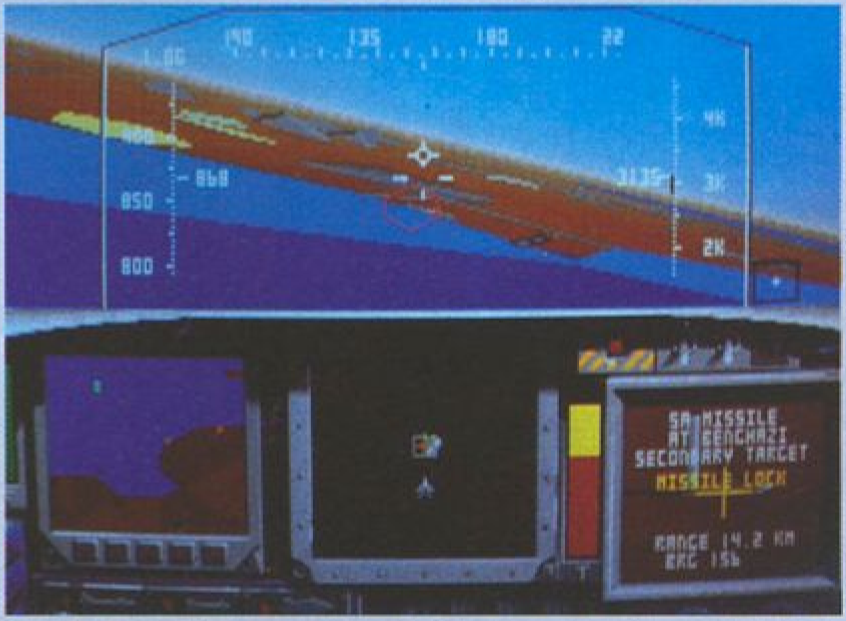
The program took approximately 1.5 man years to develop with many people working on it. Andy Hollis was the main programmer with Sid Meier. Bruce Shelley with Max Remington designed the 3d objects while Bruce alone designed the worlds. Mike Haire did most of the normal art with Murray Taylor assisting. Alan Roireau along with Chris Taormino and Russ Cooney helped develop game play and of course did the normal testing. Jeff Briggs wrote the manual.

The MCGA/VGA graduated horizon by distance was designed and implemented by Andy Hollis and the Director mode was designed and implemented by Sid Meier.

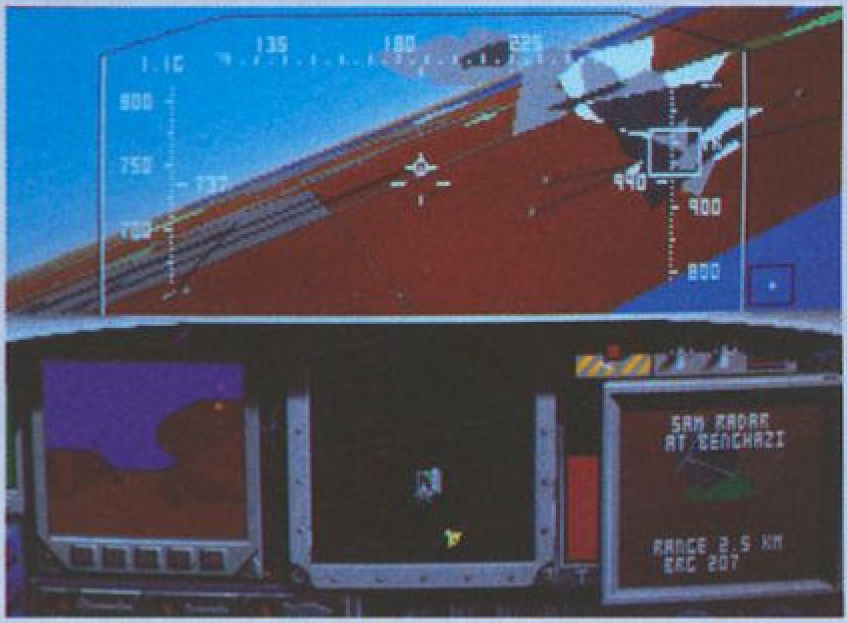
ACTION SEQUENCE



You've spotted the enemy! Home in on him!



That's it, you've got a lock!



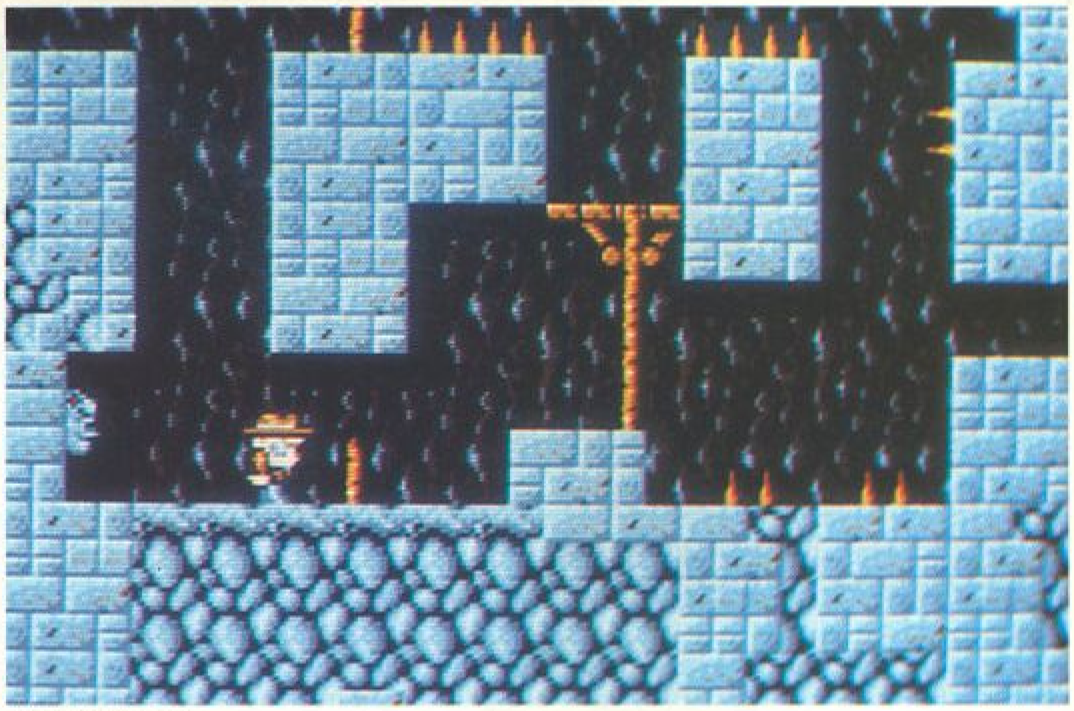
As Wild Bill Stealey himself would put it, missiles away!

RICK DANGEROUS

FIREBIRD breath new life into platform capers

STRANGE name for a super hero – Richard Dangerous – so Firebird have shortened it to 'Rick' to give it more Hollywood-style credibility. Just in case you're not impressed, he also sports a brown brimmed hat and unshaven chin, looking for all the world like Indiana Jones.

Your mission is also an Indy-style adventure. A colourful eight page comic included in the box sets the scenario in which, after surviving a bomb attempt in a restaurant where he's supposed to meet Jose to collect a map, our hero enters a car chase through the town in suitably Indy -style 1930's cars. Next follows a round of fisticuffs in a plane, after which Indy (sorry, Richard...Rick, that is) parachutes out and lands in dense jungle. After a skirmish with some 'Goolu' natives, the final panel of this gripping comic shows Rick entering a Temple pursued by a giant ball of rock. On this somewhat familiar note the comic ends and the game begins.


Rick acting up...

There are four separate levels – this may not sound like much but the degree of platform precision and puzzle solving required to beat each one means Rick's quest is no pushover.

There's no puzzling to be had in the first few screens, however. It's just a question of legging it until you can escape that boulder. After dying several times you will notice that Rick can move right or left as he falls. This is useful not just for dodging the boulders but also for avoiding the spikes that are placed on the bottom of certain caves as man traps.

Rick is armed with a gun, several sticks of dynamite, and a big stick which you should use in true colonial tradition to poke the hostile natives in the gut and kill them.

The use of the bombs and gun is graphically cute – and cartoon-like. It's slightly reminiscent of the classic computer game Spy Vs Spy, in which you could place traps for your opponents. Rick Dangerous has a similar feature with his dynamite. He can light a stick beside an object to clear his path, but he has to leg it away from it first or he may blow himself up into the bargain. Using his various gadgets imports a sort of remote control feel to the use of the joystick. Time factors are crucial- you must remember to press the fire button before you move in the direction of a nasty to let fly with a bullet.

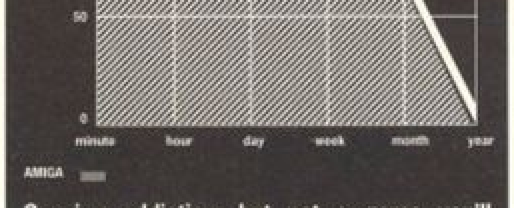
Dynamite and bullets are limited so Rick must make sure he collects every single cache of these arms as he explores the platforms. Of particular merit in *Rick Dangerous* are the puzzles. They amount to much more than simply working out a route and then leaping with pixel perfect precision to get to your destination. In *Rick Dangerous* you have to use the dynamite or your gun strategically to tilt the action in your favour. This provides a little exercise for your brain as well as your reflexes.

As well as the Temple there is a Pyramid scene, German Army base (more shades of Indy) and the Missile Silo level at the end of the game. Your final objective is shrouded in secrecy throughout the game and revealed in a graphical sequence at the end, which it would be churlish to reveal. Your immediate objectives on each level are simply to survive and blast your way through to the next, solving the tactical problems and blasting the opposition en route.

Mr Alan Hughes of Milton Keynes should be particularly pleased with *Rick Dangerous*. He wrote to ACE last month complaining that there was not enough fun in the latest games. Pure arcade fun is here in abundance, Mr Hughes and although some of the levels are pretty sparse graphically and there are occasional lapses in pace, what there is is of a very high standard. From an appallingly unoriginal scenario Firebird have hewn a splendid platform puzzler.

Eugene Lacey

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Growing addiction, but not a game you'll return to much once you've cracked it.

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£24.99dk	IMMINENT
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AMSTRAD	£9.99cs • £14.99dk	IMMINENT
C64/128	£9.99cs • £14.99dk	IMMINENT
IBM PC	£24.99dk	IMMINENT

AMIGA VERSION

Splendid sound FX and Music – and particularly well matched and synchronised with the game play. Again full marks to the Amiga programmers for the speed with which a new game starts after Rick dies. Three quick presses of the fire button and you are ready to begin again. In that respect at least, all games should be like this.

GRAPHICS	**8**	**IQ FACTOR**	**7**
AUDIO	**8**	**FUN FACTOR**	**8**

ACE RATING 890

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ugene Lacey

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IT BRINGS OUT THE BEAST IN YOU!
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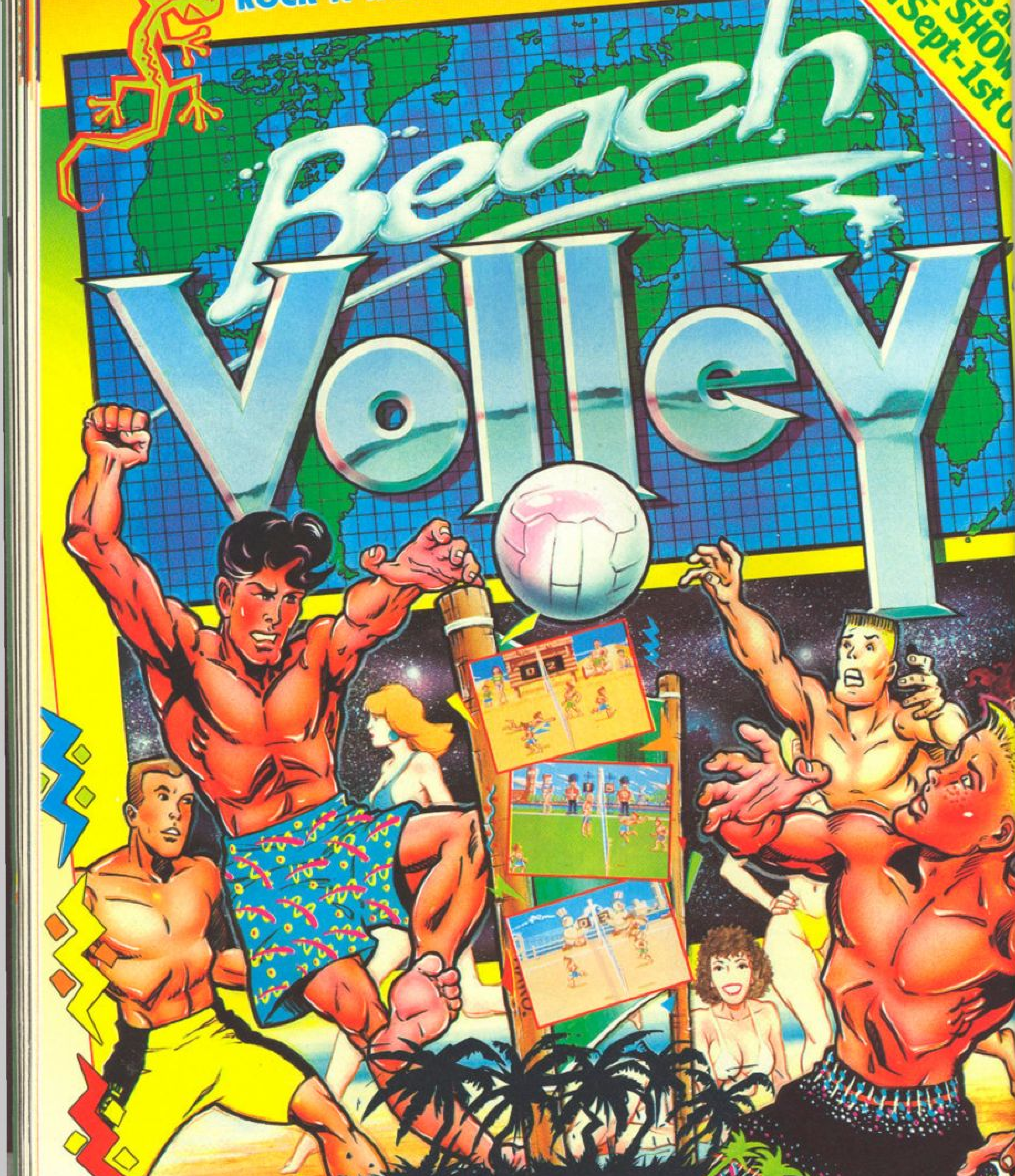

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STRIDER

USG take it in their stride

WHEN it was released in the arcades at the start of the year *Strider* became an almost instant contender for coin-op of the year. Slick graphics, a thumping soundtrack and lots of features soon gave the game the success it warranted – and US Gold grabbed the licence.

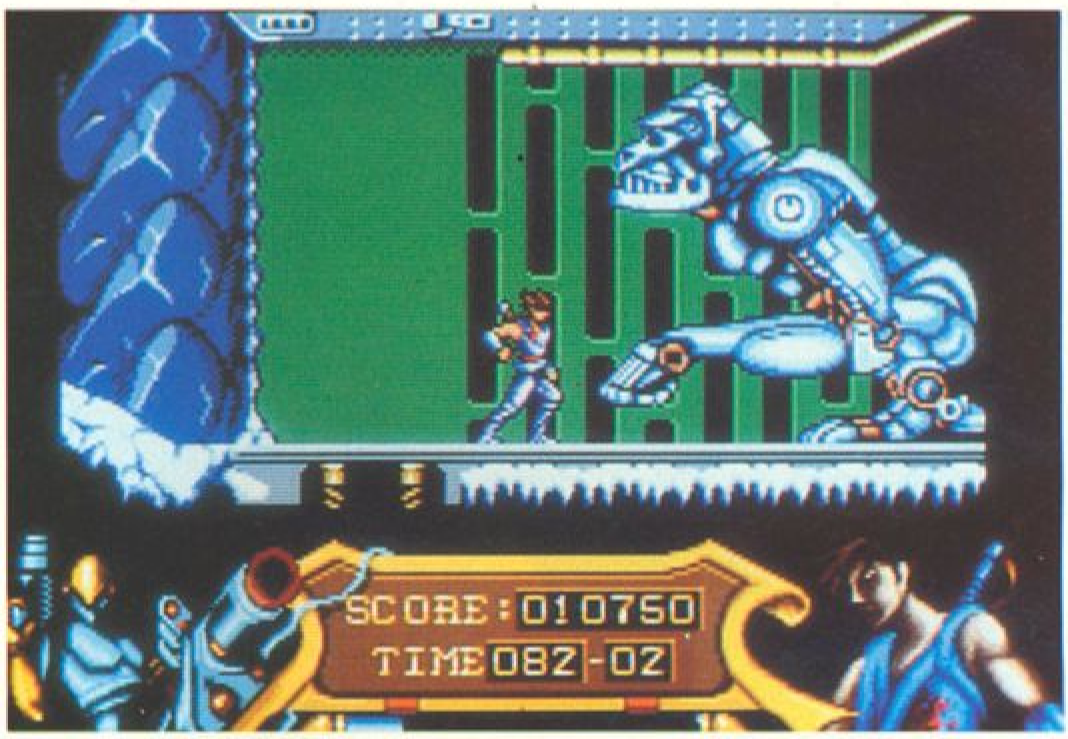
At first glance a run of the mill left-to-right scroller, *Strider* contains many original ideas, tricks, hazards and nasties that come as a complete suprise to the player; the Politburo that transforms into a giant snake, giant robot gorillas, and super-human Muscovite's, each requires a particular tactic to overcome. All have one thing in common, they take a lot of damage before blowing. The best tactic is to find an area on the screen where they can't hit you, then work your way slowly to them – remembering, however, that there's a time limit.

Strider, the main character produces the most amazing array of twists and turns in accordance with the joystick movements and type of terrain. Down sends him on a slide, diagonal and up causes a somersault, and he can hang off walls and ceilings with the aid of a hook.

Set in Russia fifty years in the future, the majority of the game is based around the player using Strider's abilities to progress through levels by avoiding hazards, traversing mountains, Russian guards and platforms.

Armed with an energy barrier which he swings round his head, Strider can inflict severe damage on all of his enemies. Little satellites can be collected which orbit the player, destroying everything they touch and adding their own firepower to yours.

All of this looked pretty unconvertible, but Tiertex, the people behind Indiana Jones, were given the task, and they've done us proud.



Guy the gorilla's two ton twin. Avoid his steel girdered fist at all costs.

After cutting through several waves of Russian troops and their robots, scaling buildings and leaping traps, the first end-of-level nasty is reached; a largish man, rippling with muscles and hell-bent on performing the Kirov ballet on your face (you're attacked by real ballet dancers later on in the game). When he has been destroyed the screen is reduced to flames from the top down, wiping out almost everything in the way.

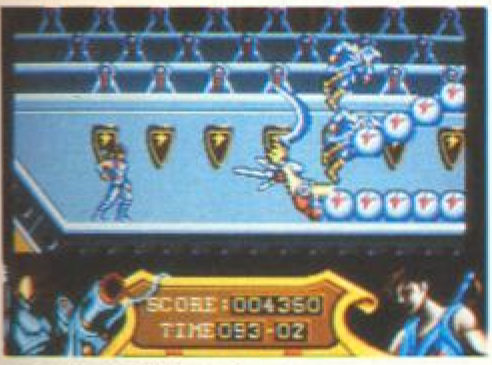
Next comes the interior of the Kremlin. Unfortunately the Politburo don't take kindly to unwelcome visitors. Seconds later they've transformed into a giant snake desperate to kill you. Once the result of that confrontation has been decided it's off to Siberia...

The graphics have been faithfully reproduced with good detail and use of colour. The background graphics are exceptional and although a few backdrops appear to be missing this doesn't affect the feel of the game at all. The main sprite is perfectly drawn, although speed and a few frames of animation had to be sacrificed owing to computer limitations.

One thing that has been changed is the level of difficulty. Your foes don't take as many hits as before pegging out and some of the jumps have been shortened, reducing the pixel-precise timing of the arcade game.

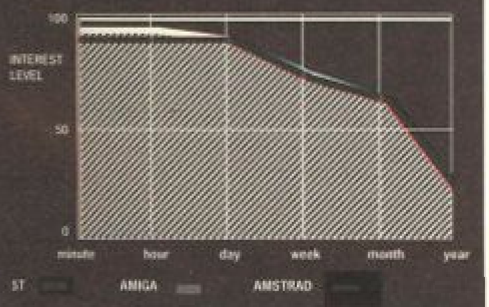
Complete with funky soundtrack and good spot effects, this is an exceptional conversion of an exceptional game. Packed with levels, features, and just about everything else you could ask for, *Strider* must surely rank as one of the greatest arcade conversions ever.

● Mark Patterson



Enter the Politburo dragon.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Incredible addictiveness brought on by the immense variety in levels. Though once completed you might not feel the need to go back.

ST VERSION

Very similar in the sound, graphics and playability department with the only real difference being two disks instead of one. A very commendable game on this format.

GRAPHICS	**9**	**IQ FACTOR**	**7**
AUDIO	**9**	**FUN FACTOR**	**8**

ACE RATING 910

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
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AMSTRAD	£9.99cs • £14.99dk	OUT NOW
C64/128	£9.99cs • £14.99dk	IMMINENT
IBM PC	£19.99dk	IMMINENT

AMIGA VERSION

Completely self contained on one disk, Amiga Strider is a game which will have you hooked right from the start. The graphics are impressively designed and coloured. All the sound is of equally high quality, from the digitised speech at the start right up to the smallest spot effects. A complete, addictive arcade game.

GRAPHICS	**9**	**IQ FACTOR**	**7**
AUDIO	**9**	**FUN FACTOR**	**9**

ACE RATING 910

AMSTRAD VERSION

The first 8 bit version we have seen, and very impressive it is. The graphics are well coloured and defined and keep the feel of the game. The only real gripe is the weak sound effects.

GRAPHICS	**7**	**IQ FACTOR**	**7**
AUDIO	**7**	**FUN FACTOR**	**9**

ACE RATING 876

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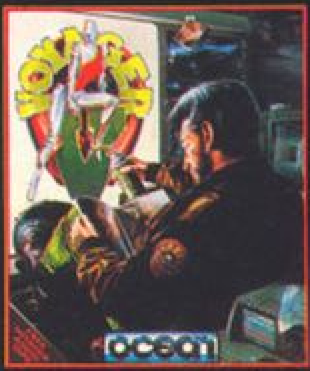

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ACE MAGAZINE.

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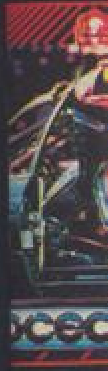

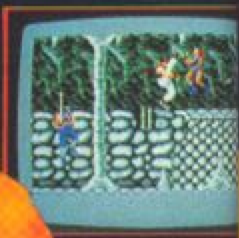

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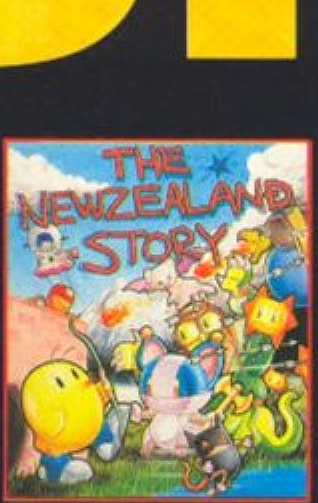

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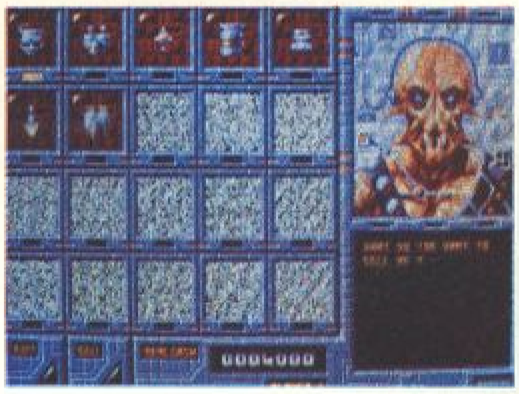
XENON II

IMAGEWORKS' super-smooth scroller

DO you groan with boredom when you hear about yet another vertically scrolling shoot-em-up competing for your hard-earned, or hard-begged, cash? Well if you do, stop it – because *Xenon II* almost lives up to the hype, which makes it a very impressive game indeed.

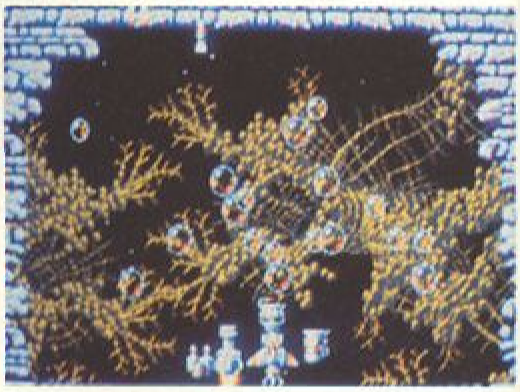
If you really need an excuse to have a good old-fashioned shoot-em-up, you'll be worried to hear that the Xenites are up to their old nefarious tricks – and you probably thought you'd finished them off in the first Xenon game, didn't you? This time they've gone and planted five Time Bombs in different periods of history corresponding to each of Xenon II's five levels. It seems that the very fabric of time as we know it is at threat and only you can save the day (week, month, year , eon and so on...)

So you strap yourself into your Megablaster and off you jolly well go. The ship is a potentially very sophisticated little thing, but starts off with only a thruster, a blaster and a shield; you've got to earn your extras on the way. Each of the game's five levels represents a period of of history, and logically enough you begin in some sort of stone age, flying over the rocky structures hanging in space. Masses of beautifully designed alien nasties come swarming down at you and you fill 'em full of lead.

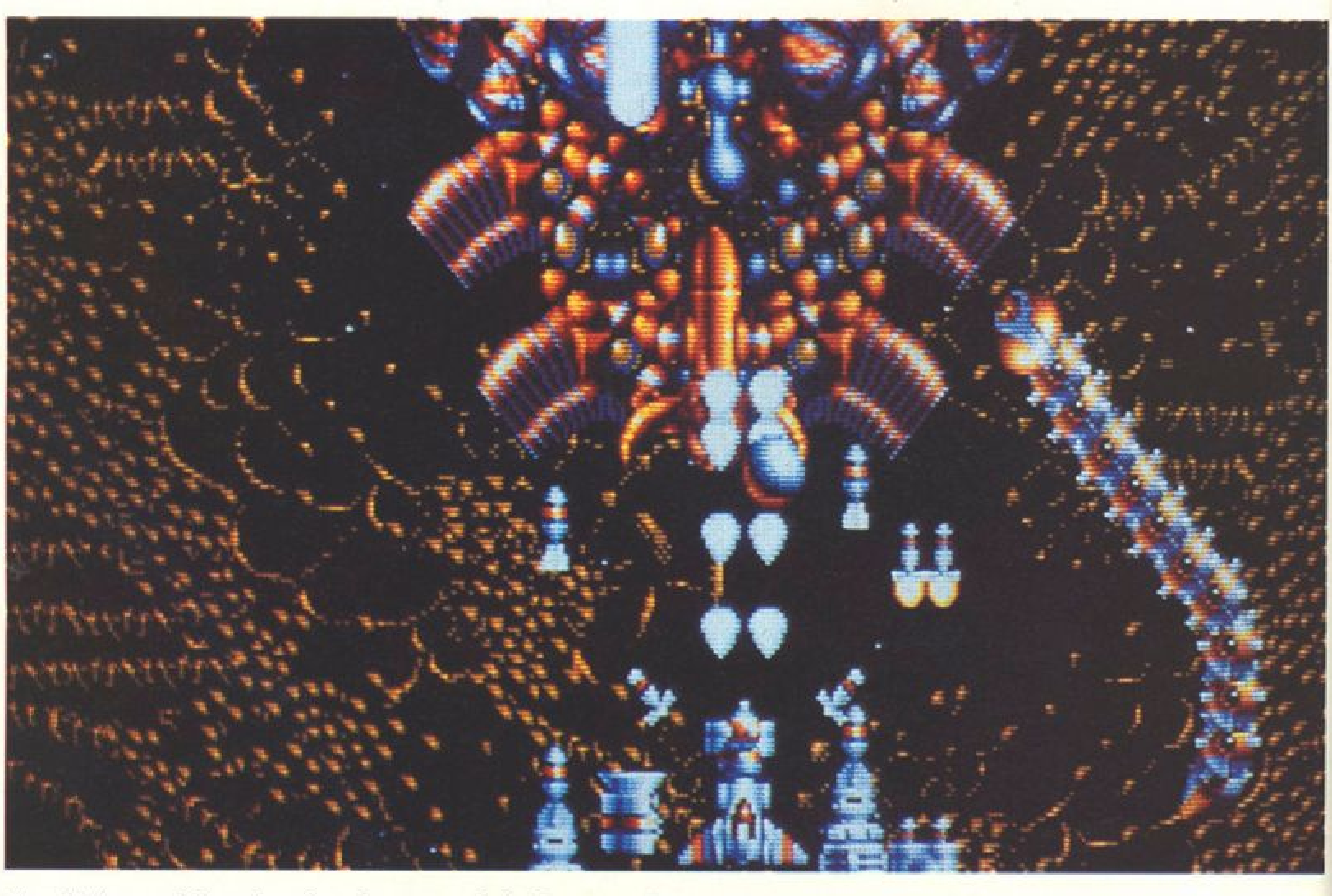

And there's Crispin himself, ready to sell you any weapon you want – as long as you've got the dosh.

As each crittur is wasted it turns into a floating bubble that means cash for you. It's in your interests to be as greedy as possible and collect as many bubbles as you can, since cash can be turned into a sumptuous variety of extra weapons at your twice-per-level stops at Crispin's swop shop (more of this later). Tokens also appear, giving you extra firepower in your moments of greatest need.

At the end of each of the five levels there is that old friend, the end-of-level Guardian, to conjure with. These creatures are extremely well-designed, extremely revolting, and extremely hard to kill; each one has to be dealt with in a different manner, and discovering the right one will cost you many a life.


The giant alien is zapped leaving a cloud of energy giving bubbles in its wake.

If you've spent wisely in the weapons shop,


The ship is now fully equipped - and awesome in its fire power. Note the debt to R-Type with the worm appearing from the monsters intestines.

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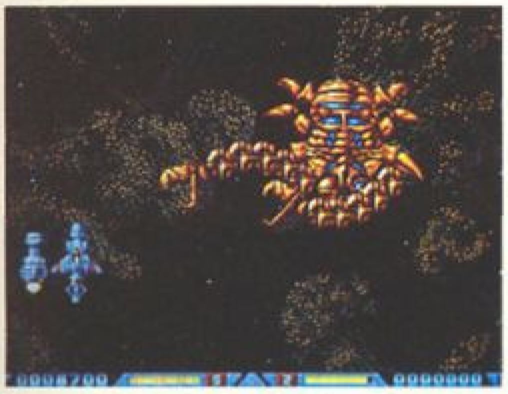

You could be in trouble here, but then you are throughout the game....

of course, you'll have a better chance of success. Some of the extras you can purchase are fairly standard, such as cannon and laser. Others, however, show much more flair – check out the following drone for instance; it's hard to see quite what it does, but it certainly looks pretty bobbing around behind you. Super Nashwan Power will give you 10 seconds of really satisfying total destruction. Get yourself enough cash, or collect enough tokens, and you could find yourself blasting around with three or four extras trailing behind you.

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IBM PC	£24.99dk	IMMINENT

ST VERSION

One of the prettiest games you're likely to see on the ST this year, and certainly one of the more addictive. It's one of those games that really do approach arcade quality, and the sample sound track will take some beating too. Very classy.

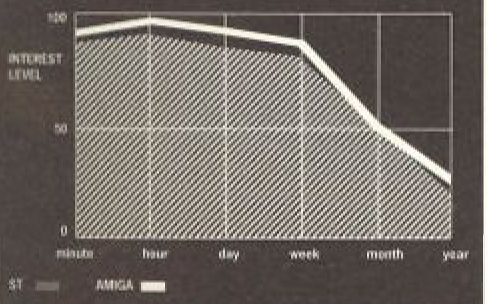
GRAPHICS 9 **IQ FACTOR** 4
AUDIO 9 **FUN FACTOR** 9
ACE RATING 905

AMIGA VERSION

By far the best version. The Bomb the Base soundtrack that accompanies *Xenon II* is superb. You can hear every last scratch, yelp, and shriek as the sound chip works overtime. Graphics are colourful , smooth and fast. In every department *Xenon II* stretches the Amiga further than any shoot 'em up has ever stretched it before.

GRAPHICS 9 **IQ FACTOR** 4
AUDIO 9 **FUN FACTOR** 9
ACE RATING 910

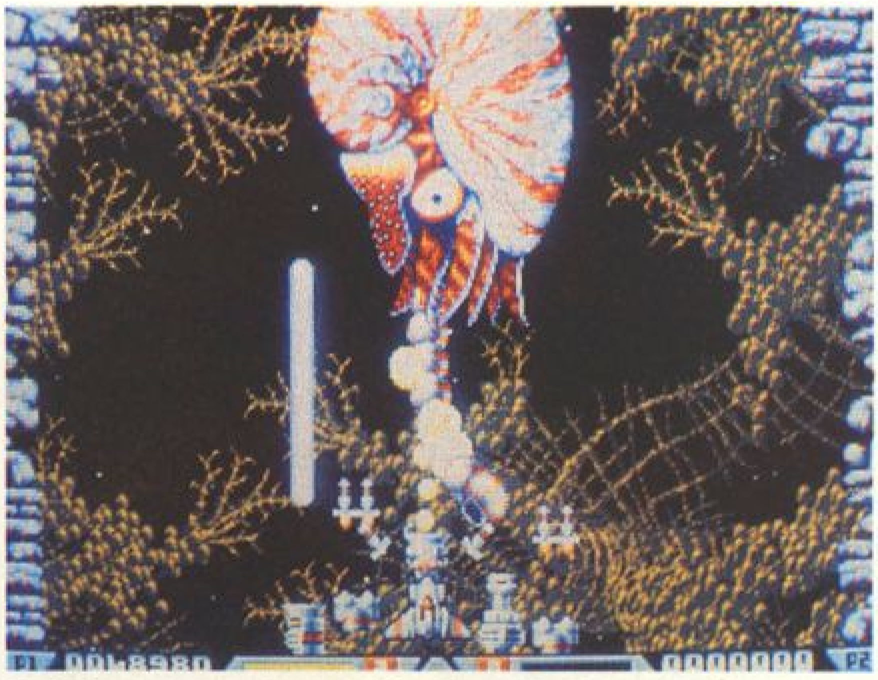
PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Instant fun and addiction, and tough enough to keep you going for a good long time.

If all this sounds like familiar stuff – well, it is. There are elements of just about every shoot-em-up you've ever played in *Xenon II*, from *Space Invaders* through to *R-Type*. But, surprisingly enough, this derivative streak doesn't matter; The Bitmap Brothers have put the bits and pieces together in such a professional and stylish way that you'll just want to grasp your stick and join battle.

Graphics and scrolling (it really is 'super smooth') are excellent throughout. Aliens zip about the screen with great suavity, while one innovative feature is the ability to move backwards off the screen, giving you in effect a greater playing area as well as the chance of another crack at creatures you haven't managed to blast.

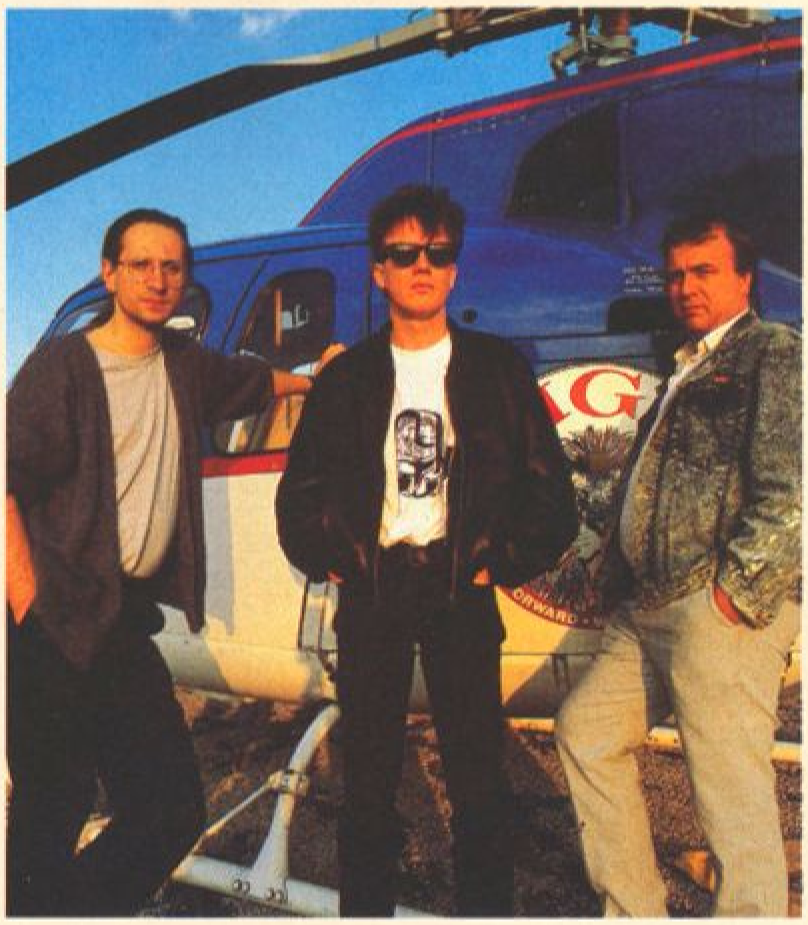


End-of-level beauty...Pretty looking thing, ain't it? Kill it anyway.

As an extra there is also a sound track sampled from Bomb the Bass's 13th Precinct Hip Hop, which sounds pretty damn good. All in all, *Xenon II* - Megablast is one of the most accomplished shoot-em-ups you're likely to come across this side of Christmas. Even though there are only five levels, the amount of detail and action in there makes it a stiff challenge. You'd be doing yourself a disservice if you don't at least give it a play test.

● Pete Connor

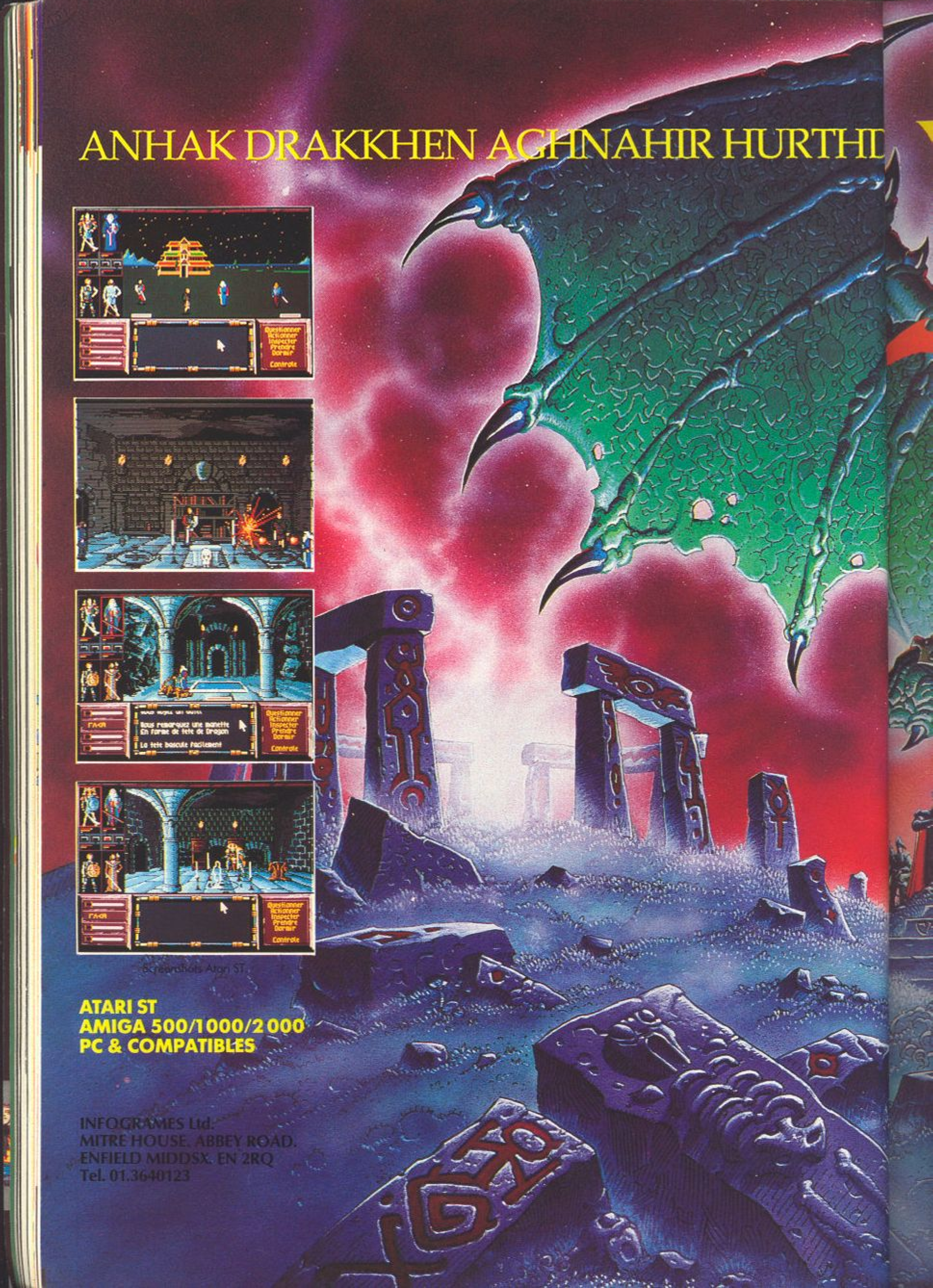
BITMAPS DEPARTURE



The Bitmap's are keen to do something different in their next release.

Although Xenon fans might like to see the game run and run like a software Police Academy the Bitmaps want to do something new 'to keep the interest for ourselves'. The new game will still be an an arcade style game as this is where the Bitmap's believe their best design skills lie.

'If we do another shoot 'em up it will have to be completely unlike anything that has been done before.' The leading design team would love to do a game for the PC Engine – though this is not on the cards at the moment. 'We are interested in the hand helds and the sixteen bit consoles but it is a business matter as to who gets the development systems - and who gets to do games for the machines' Eric Bitmap told ACE.


ANHAK DRAKKHEN AGHNAHIR HURTHL
Questionner
Actionner
Inspecter
Prendre
Dormir
Controle

Vous remarquez une manette
En forme de tête de Dragon

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Screenshots Atari ST

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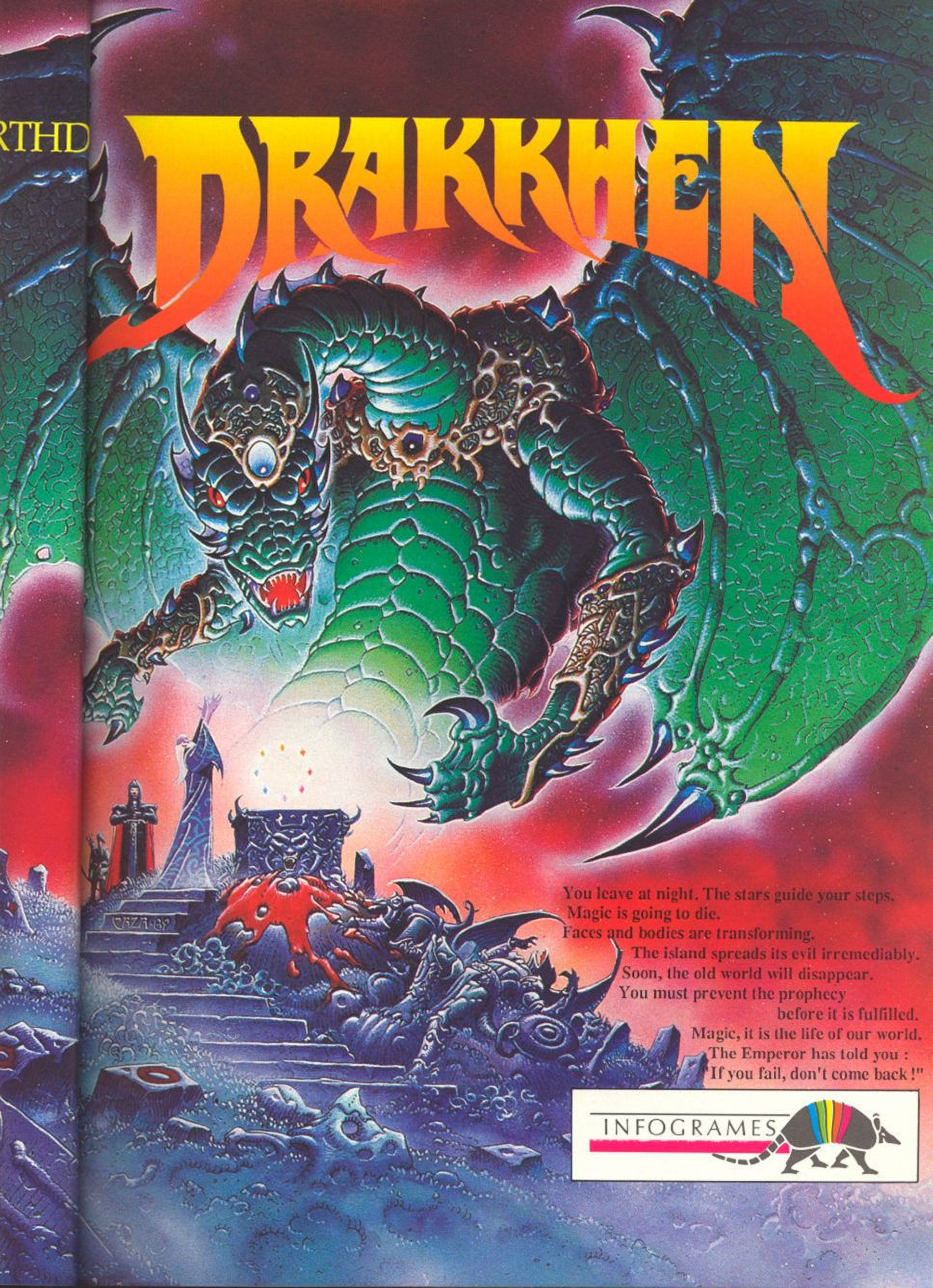


You leave at night. The stars guide your steps.
Magic is going to die.
Faces and bodies are transforming.
The island spreads its evil irremediably.
Soon, the old world will disappear.
You must prevent the prophecy
before it is fulfilled.
Magic, it is the life of our world.
The Emperor has told you :
"If you fail, don't come back !"

INFOGRAMES

TANK ATTACK

Blitzkrieg CDS Style

TRADITIONALLY war games were table top board games with model landscapes and troops. All calculations were performed with pen, paper and dice. CDS have taken the original theme one step further and brought in a computer to replace pen and pad.

The game is centred around four fictional countries, Armania, Calderon, Kazaldis and Sarapan. None have any real tactical advantage, other than personal taste. However the game does require a minimum of two human players as the computer doesn't control any country – so make sure you bring a friend.

The board is divided into four provinces each governed by a separate state. Each province features various kinds of scenery such as forests and villages. Some of the landscape is impassable by any vehicle, or halves your movement rate. Right in the corner of the provinces is the military HQ. This is the main game target for the opposition – when they arrive here it's game over for whoever lives there. The whole map is overlaid with an hexagonal grid, each clear grid representing one movement space.

First thing is setting up the board. Each player picks a team of eight tanks and armoured cars, the strongest being a Main Battle tank ranging through light tanks right down to Light Armoured Cars the weakest units. If there are three players two are allied against the third player who in turn gets double the units. Between each of the countries is a demilitarised zone where no units can placed until the game starts, otherwise you would be able to start combat right from turn one. In each quadrant.

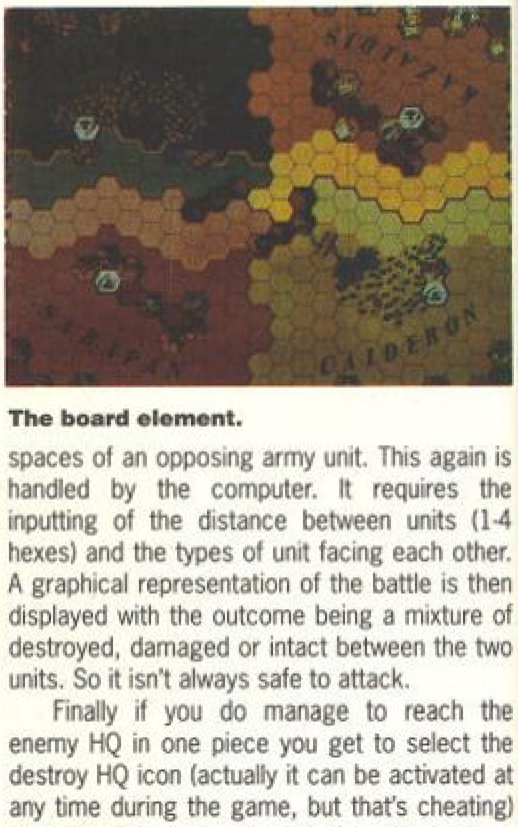
All calculations are now handled by the computer. The first screen it shows is the news screen. Set in the style of a newspaper, one section describes the current situation of the war, another the weather and how it will affect unit movement. This is not a particularly vital screen but it helps to break the routine of the game. Then come the individual player turns. The computer will assign your side a number of movement points which correspond to the hexagonal grid on the board. Each unit can move any number of hexes up to the allocated number of movement points (subject to terrain restrictions).

Then comes the fire sequence. A unit can attack or be attacked when it is within four spaces of an opposing army unit. This again is handled by the computer. It requires the inputting of the distance between units (1-4 hexes) and the types of unit facing each other. A graphical representation of the battle is then displayed with the outcome being a mixture of destroyed, damaged or intact between the two units. So it isn't always safe to attack.

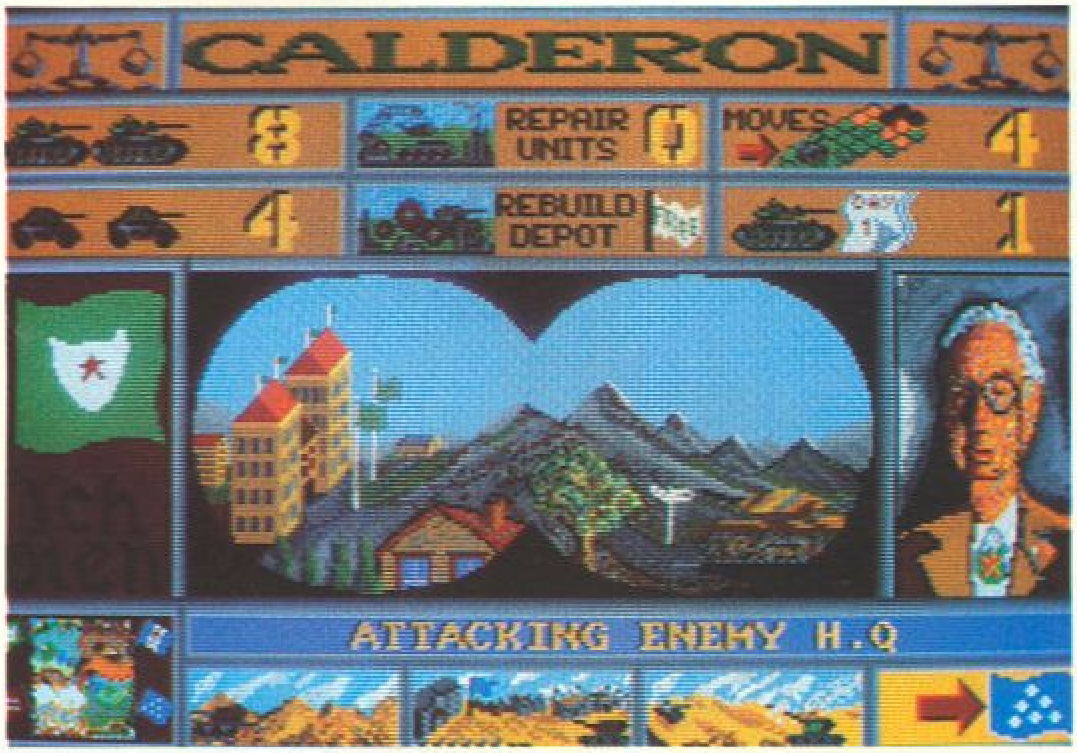
Finally if you do manage to reach the enemy HQ in one piece you get to select the destroy HQ icon (actually it can be activated at any time during the game, but that's cheating) and blow them away, thus winning the game.

Tank Attack is an original concept as far as other software houses go, though not as good as *Brian Clough's Football Fortunes* CDS's previous computer board game crossover. It does lack most of the in depth elements and movements which grace the tables of war gamers through the straightforward run and blast tactics used. So if it's just a fun, simple strategy game you're after give this a look in.

● Mark Patterson



The board element.



A typical battle in scenic surroundings.

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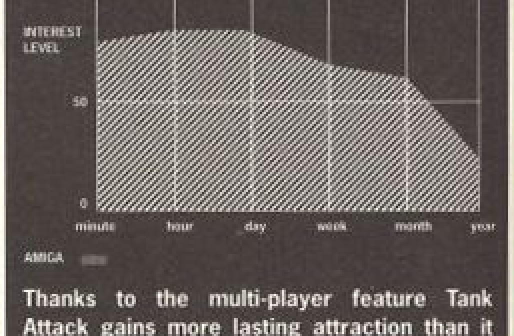
AMIGA VERSION

The main screen graphics are produced in a cartoon style which gives the game a slightly more light-hearted view. The software itself is nothing outstanding, if anything gives the impression of cowboy merchandise, but when put along side the board aspect makes for a fun multi-player game.

GRAPHICS	7	**IQ FACTOR**	7
AUDIO	5	**FUN FACTOR**	7

ACE RATING 782

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Thanks to the multi-player feature Tank Attack gains more lasting attraction than it really deserves. Though the novelty will wear off in the long term.

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Mark Patterson

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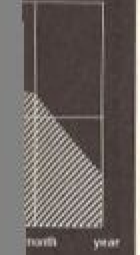

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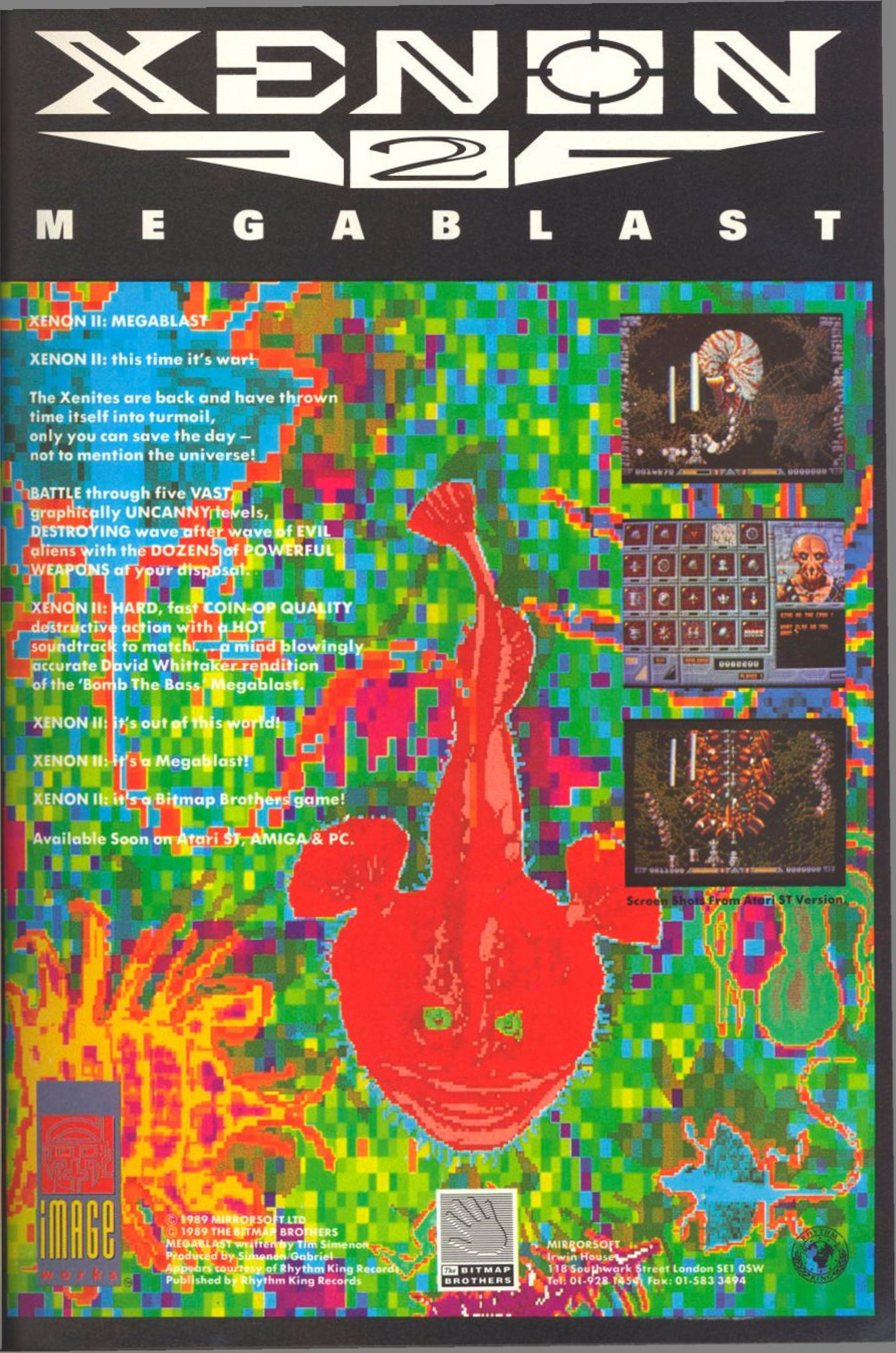

XENON II: MEGABLAST

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XENON II: it's a Megablast!

XENON II: it's a Bitmap Brothers game!

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Screen Shots From Atari ST Version.

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Produced by Simenon/Gabriel
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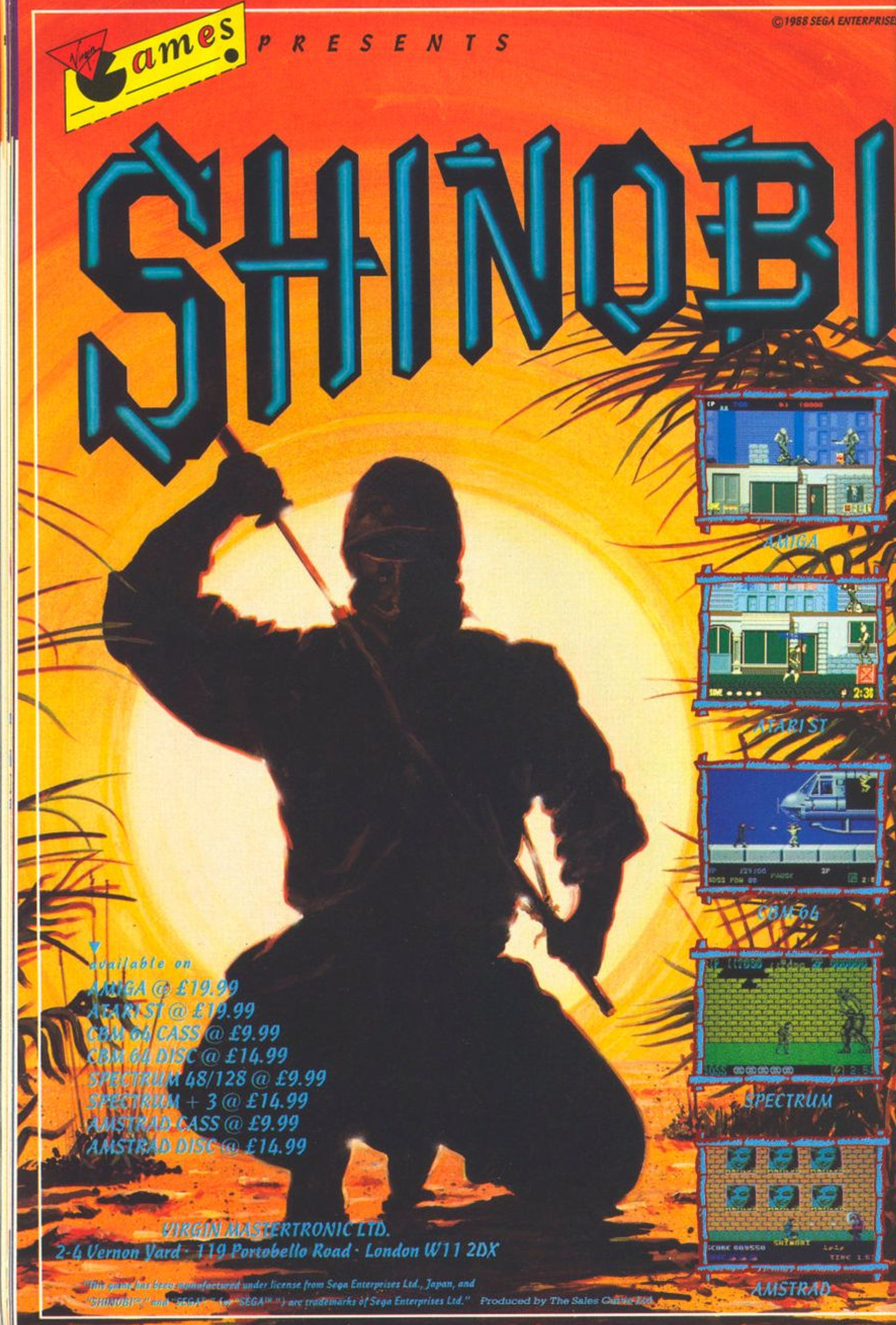
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FAST BREAK

ACCOLADE'S slam-dunk simulator

REPUTEDLY one of the greatest rivalries since the invention of the basketball itself, the Slammers and the Jammers are at it again. This time it's two teams of six taking part in a three-on-three contest.

You compete with a friend or a computer opponent, and before the match starts a few tactical decisions have to be made: the length of the quarters (3 to 12 minutes) and exactly which members of the squad are going to play. A quick resume of each player's strengths and weaknesses helps you decide.

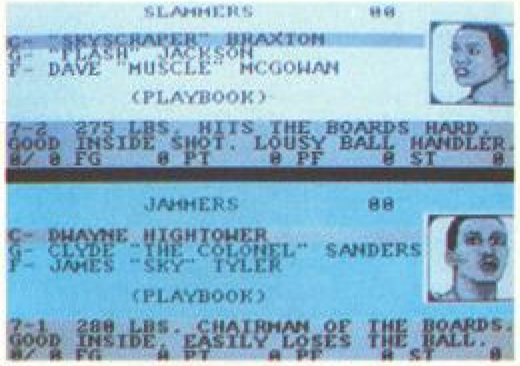
The court is viewed as two awkward flick-screen halves. As a result any action in the centre of the court inevitably becomes confused. Ball moves include dribbling, passing, shooting and opportunities for calling offensive and defensive plays. There are two kinds of personal foul and no free throws. Unusually, you don't automatically control the player nearest the ball; switching between players manually tends to slow the action down.

Anyone keen on extra tactical play can pick one of 14 pre-designed offensive plays or create one of their own using the Playmaker.

On paper it all sounds pretty sophisticated. On court, it's a disappointment. The sprites are poorly defined and jerkily animated, play's spoilt by the flick-screen action and there isn't that much skill required. It only takes a couple of minutes to get used to the shooting controls and after that almost every basket you attempt goes in.

If you've always dreamed of hurling yourself up the court in a pair of Lycra shorts, dribble driving, no-look passing and slam-dunking your way into basketball history, keep on dreaming. Accolade has built up a reputation for producing top class sports sims. This isn't one of them.

● Kati Hanza



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SLAMMERS                    00
C- "SKYSCRAPER" BRAXTON
G- "FLASH" JACKSON
F- DAVE "MUSCLE" MCGOWAN
        (PLAYBOOK)
7-2  275 LBS. HITS THE BOARDS HARD.
GOOD INSIDE SHOT. LOUSY BALL HANDLER.
0/ 0 FG     0 PT     0 PF      0 ST     0

JAMMERS                     00
C- DWAYNE HIGHTOWER
G- CLYDE "THE COLONEL" SANDERS
F- JAMES "SKY" TYLER
        (PLAYBOOK)
7-1  280 LBS. CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARDS.
GOOD INSIDE, EASILY LOSES THE BALL.
0/ 0 FG     0 PT     0 PF      0 ST     0
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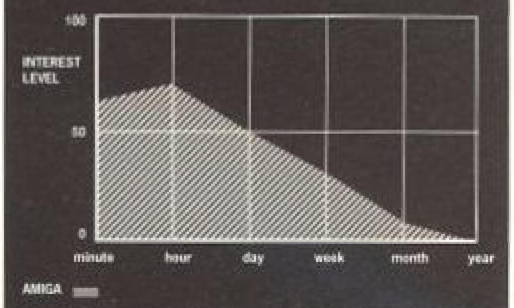
You make your own selection so there's no excuse for putting old butterfingers in the team.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Curiosity dwindles to boredom as the absense of any real challenge becomes increasingly clear.

RELEASE BOX

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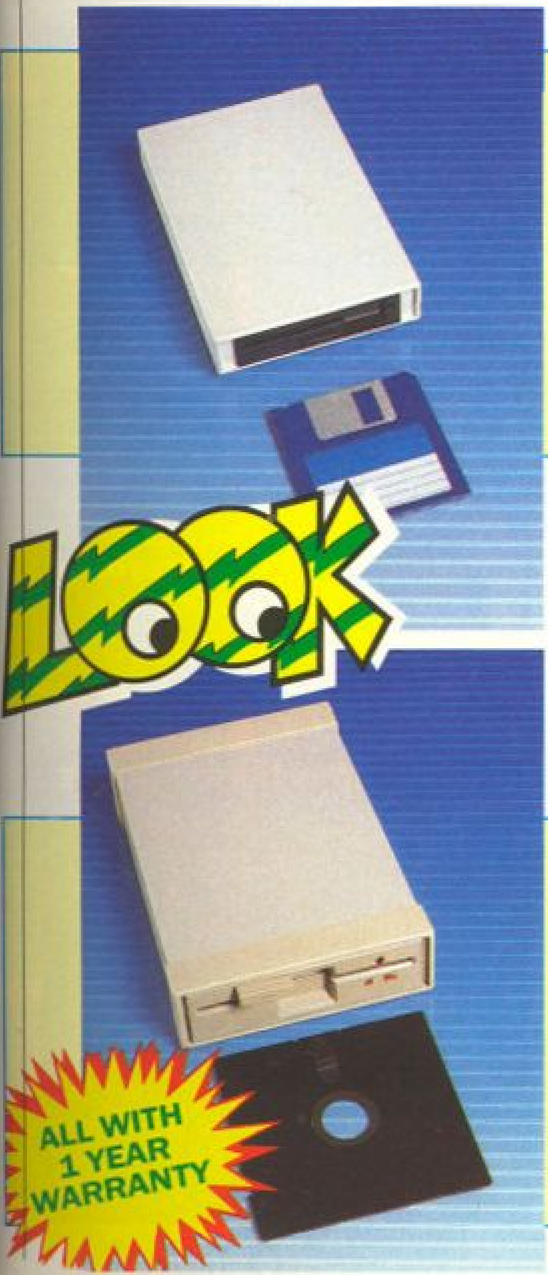
AMIGA VERSION

Flat-footed sprites, badly drawn graphics and very limited sound effects aren't much of a showcase for the Amiga's potential. Coupled with unchallenging gameplay, they amount to a pretty mediocre package.

GRAPHICS	**4**	**IQ FACTOR**	**5**
AUDIO	**2**	**FUN FACTOR**	**4**

ACE RATING 492



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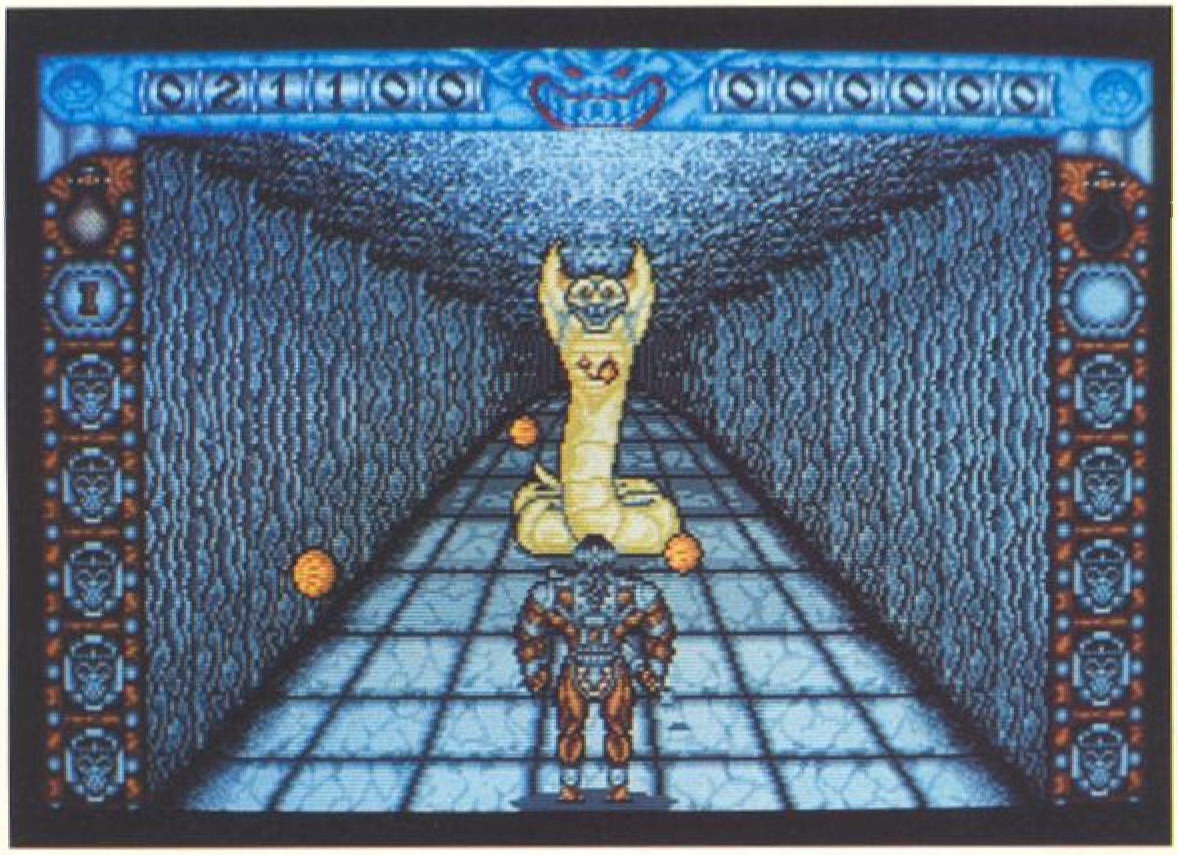


A record of all your secret transactions is kept in a drawer in your desk. Keep hoping the opposition doesn't find out.

OIL IMPERIUM

RELINE strike black gold

REAL men don't eat quiche – they work in the oil business. That doesn't mean endless kanoodling with Sue Ellen, alas; instead, it involves coping with fluctuating oil prices, delivery contracts, sabotage, fire-fighting procedures, keeping an eye on your balance sheet and still staying on top of the competition at the end of the month.

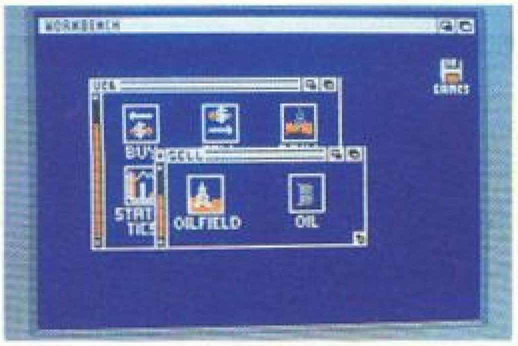
Oil Imperium works rather like a very sophisticated version of Monopoly. Four players (human or computer) take consecutive turns; each turn lasts for one calendar month and involves as much wheeler-dealing as you want to cram in. It's not a sociable game. As some actions need to be kept secret, human opponents have to keep away from the monitor while you're playing. Competing solo causes fewer arguments.

You work to one of four objectives (ranging from richest player after three years trading to acquiring more than 80% of the market share) from the comfort of your office, clicking on a selection of icons to perform different tasks. Your first job is to commission expert studies on the viability of different oilfields in eight different regions. Once you've picked one which looks profitable, you can start drilling, buying storage tanks and, eventually, selling your oil. You can consult your balance sheet or the newspaper for the latest oil info at any time.

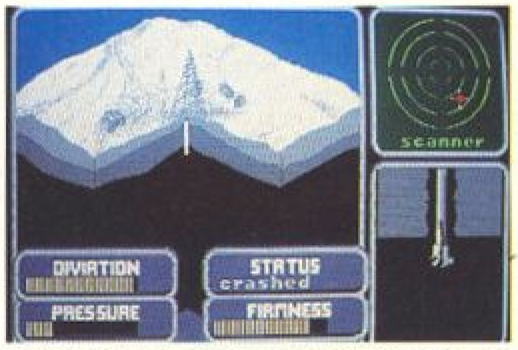
For budding JRs, there's the option to contract agents to damage an opponent's oil wells, rob a competitor's bank, blackmail oil-purchasing agents or blow up oil tanks. Alternatively, you might want to launch an investigation into any strikes against your own fields. If you're successful, you get compensation in the form of oilfields.

Sabotage, telephone messages, and arcade sequences inject the action with extra unpredictability. The success of drilling, fire-fighting and pipe-laying depends on your arcade skills. Three mini-sequences involve you centering and determining the force of your drill, connecting sections of pipe in competition with an opponent, and dynamiting ignited oil-wells without destroying them. The telephone rings periodically to let you know of any new developments and offers of supply contracts; it takes a shrewd mind to work out when to accept one.

Oil might not sound like the stuff that the best strategy games are made of but with so much variety to the action there's little danger of anyone but the most hardened arcadesters getting bored. There are plenty of detailed touches (you can even pick the decor of your office), the arcade sequences fit in perfectly and no two games ever turn out exactly the same. Rainbow Arts, who don't exactly have a fantastic track record in this sort of field, have a taken a very unusual subject, lavished lots of time and attention on it and come up with an extremely slick, absorbing and original game.



Oil Imperium is full of neat touches like this – just press the power button to exit the screen.



Don't bother getting a contractor to do the drilling. DIY is cheaper and usually more successful.

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£19.99dk	IMMINENT
AMIGA	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£24.99dk	IMMINENT

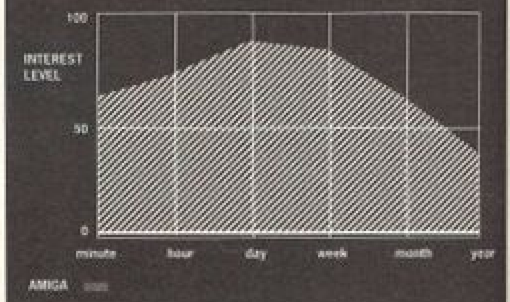
AMIGA VERSION

Slick graphics, user-friendly controls and pleasant soundtrack combine with a helpful, if slightly oddly translated, manual to make this extremely enjoyable to play. There's even a free poster thrown in.

GRAPHICS	**7**	**IQ FACTOR**	**9**
AUDIO	**7**	**FUN FACTOR**	**8**

ACE RATING 835

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Initial persistence is rewarded by long term enjoyment of an involved and complicated game.

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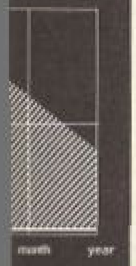

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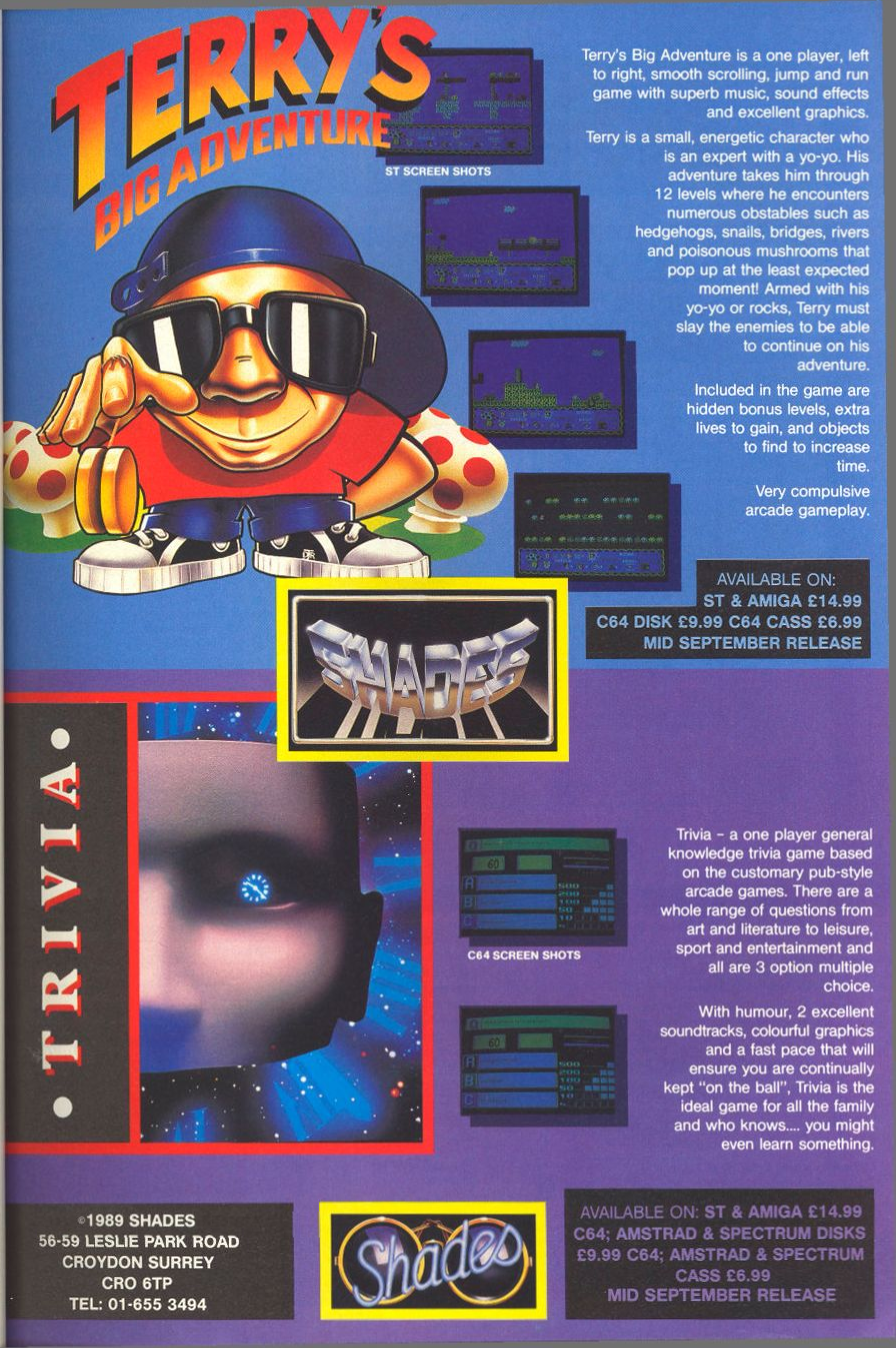

Terry's Big Adventure is a one player, left to right, smooth scrolling, jump and run game with superb music, sound effects and excellent graphics.

ST SCREEN SHOTS

Terry is a small, energetic character who is an expert with a yo-yo. His adventure takes him through 12 levels where he encounters numerous obstables such as hedgehogs, snails, bridges, rivers and poisonous mushrooms that pop up at the least expected moment! Armed with his yo-yo or rocks, Terry must slay the enemies to be able to continue on his adventure.

Included in the game are hidden bonus levels, extra lives to gain, and objects to find to increase time.

Very compulsive arcade gameplay.

AVAILABLE ON:
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MID SEPTEMBER RELEASE

C64 SCREEN SHOTS

Trivia - a one player general knowledge trivia game based on the customary pub-style arcade games. There are a whole range of questions from art and literature to leisure, sport and entertainment and all are 3 option multiple choice.

With humour, 2 excellent soundtracks, colourful graphics and a fast pace that will ensure you are continually kept "on the ball", Trivia is the ideal game for all the family and who knows.... you might even learn something.

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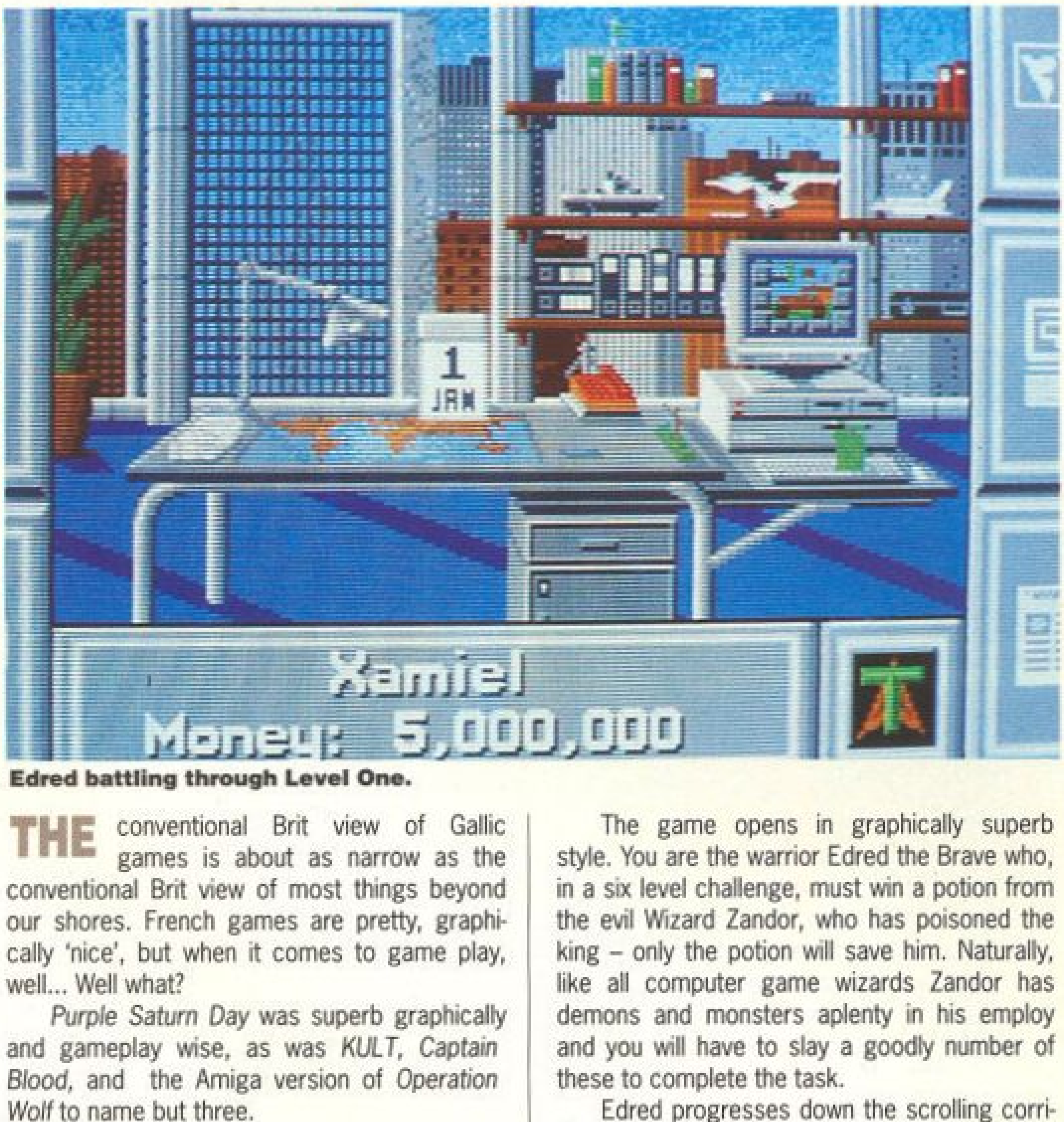
MID SEPTEMBER RELEASE

CASTLE WARRIOR

A French Revolution as DELPHINE storm Zandor's Castle.



Edred battling through Level One.

THE conventional Brit view of Gallic games is about as narrow as the conventional Brit view of most things beyond our shores. French games are pretty, graphically 'nice', but when it comes to game play, well... Well what?

Purple Saturn Day was superb graphically and gameplay wise, as was *KULT*, *Captain Blood*, and the Amiga version of *Operation Wolf* to name but three.

So when you hear that one of our best known companies – famed for their game play – and none other than Palace Software are linking up with Paris-based Delphine software to launch *Castle Warrior* you have the right to expect great things of such an entente cordiale.

AMSTRAD VERSION

Excellent use of Amiga's sound facilities. You have an option of sound FX and music and both are excellent. One slightly annoying factor is the reload. It does so at the end of each game. Surely there must be some way around this?

GRAPHICS	8	**IQ FACTOR**	6
AUDIO	6	**FUN FACTOR**	6

ACE RATING 825

The game opens in graphically superb style. You are the warrior Edred the Brave who, in a six level challenge, must win a potion from the evil Wizard Zandor, who has poisoned the king – only the potion will save him. Naturally, like all computer game wizards Zandor has demons and monsters aplenty in his employ and you will have to slay a goodly number of these to complete the task.

Edred progresses down the scrolling corridor with a loud clumping of feet. The nasties are clawing at him from the walls and edge slowly towards him from the depths of the seemingly endless corridor. Edred's sword is manipulated by a combination of pressing the joystick button down and moving the arm of the stick through its eight positions. When you successfully strike one of the flying bats or a claw they disappear in a puff of grey smoke.

Edred doesn't have to kill all of the nasties, though it's more fun if he does and wins him extra points. The gameplay here is slightly flawed in that Edred does not always recover quickly enough from swinging his sword to make another parry or swing. A bit frustrating this, as just when you think you're warmed up and gleefully trashing the flying bats, you die – quite unnecessarily and through no lack of skill on your part.

A couple of large, fireball-spitting nasties have to be taken out in level one if you are to proceed to the next level. This is achieved by swinging the sword at the fireballs and sending them back at the monster. Again, gameplay here could have been better. The sword needs to have a sort of cricket bat feel to it for this to work effectively, which it doesn't. It appears an arbitrary choice which fireballs are returned and which aren't – and in any event it only needs two to kill them, which seems far too easy.

There is a welcome change of weapon in level two. You are armed with a spear which you must lob at the the giant dragon who is guarding the entry to the level three (The Subterranean River). This is where the leaping left and right comes into its own. This section is well animated – Edred really looks as if he is leaping for his life. The Subterranean River is similar to the rapids level in Dragons Lair – though not quite as breath taking. Edred has a shield in this level to protect himself from the Stalactites, boulders, and serpents that rise up from the swirling water to snap at Edred's tiny canoe. This is a tough and enjoyable level – though most people would prefer to be armed with something a bit more deadly than a shield.

Level Four brings you close to the end of the challenge – and reveals shades of Space Harrier as the highly eclectic nature of this arcade challenge becomes apparent. Edred flies through the skies atop a flying dragon – shooting out fireballs at Zandor's most feared beast – the giant dragon Jibba. If he bests this one he faces the final challenge with Zandor in the penultimate level. Dodge the spells cast by the evil Wizard as he sits on his floating throne and grab the potion. Now fly back in glory to cure the King's poison.

Sounds easy – but it will take quite a few sessions to beat this little number. Castle Warrior is a most coin-op-like concoction. It achieves high levels of graphics, animation, and sound but is aimed squarely at the gamer who wants to test his reflexes alone – leaving his intellect for other pursuits or slightly more cerebral software.

● Eugene Lacey

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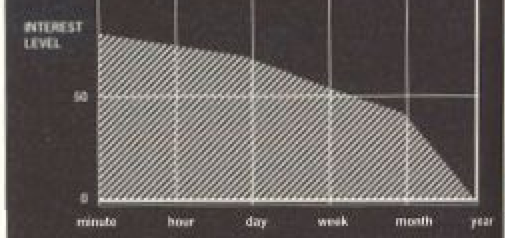

Fun while it lasts - but once you have saved the king from a nasty dose of Wizard-enduced Salmonella it's unlikely to ever spin in your disk drive again.

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● Eugene Lacey

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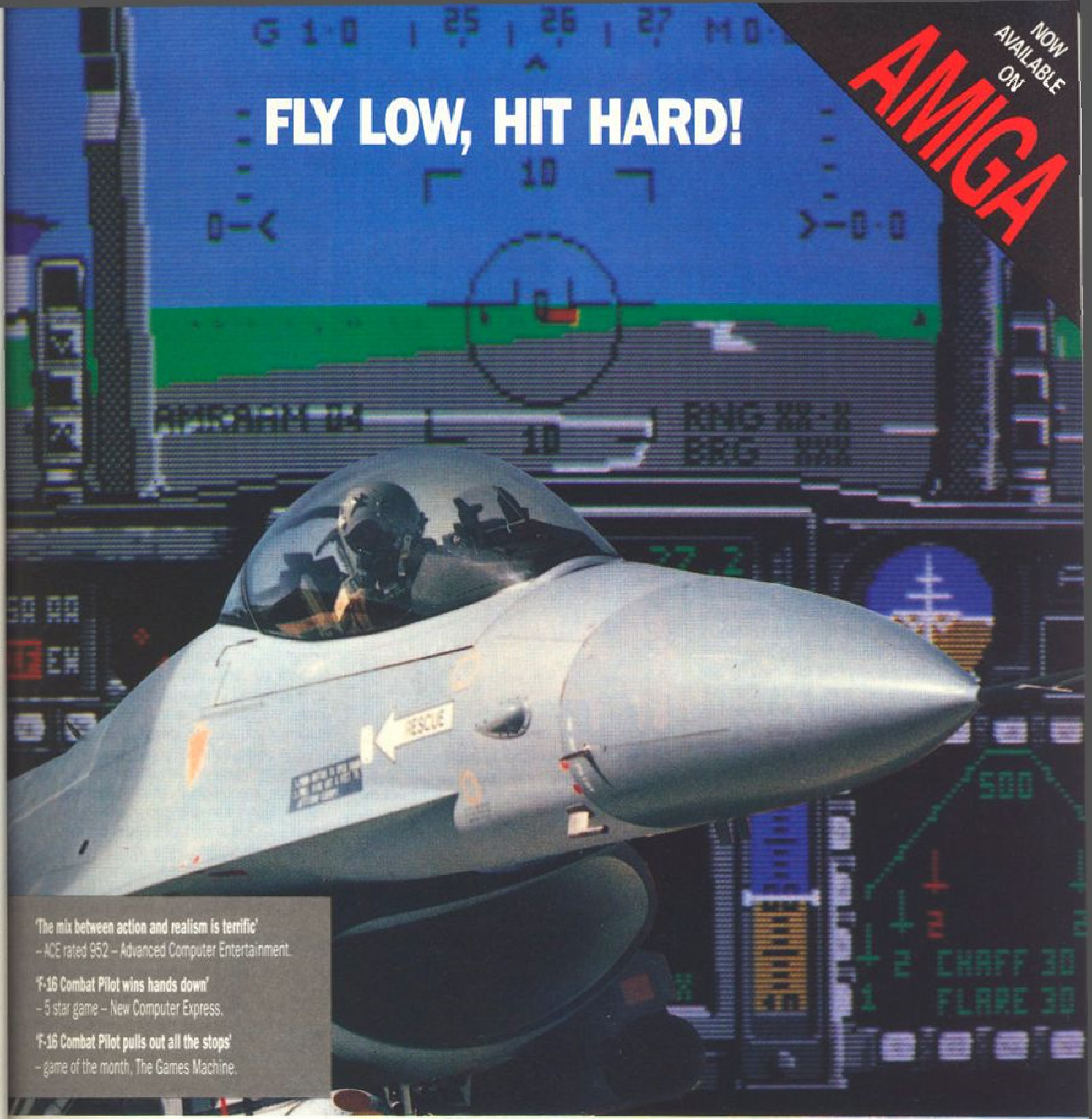

'The mix between action and realism is terrific'
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'F-16 Combat Pilot wins hands down'
– 5 star game – New Computer Express.

'F-16 Combat Pilot pulls out all the stops'
– game of the month, The Games Machine.

m primed for action as my F-16 leaves the runway. This time y mission is to destroy a battalion of tanks. Suddenly, threat arning – interceptors closing fast! I quickly select dogfight ode and arm a Sidewinder. We both fire at the same time – haff and a high-g turn out manoeuvres his missile. A loud xplosion tells me he's not so lucky.

F-16
COMBAT PILOT

Flying fast and low, I turn my F-16 towards my target. Time to switch on the ground radar and arm the laser-guided Mavericks. I fire six missiles in quick succession, Lantirn automatically locking on to each tank. With flak bursting around me I dive for cover and head for home. Approaching base, I contact the tower and request a talkdown for my night landing.

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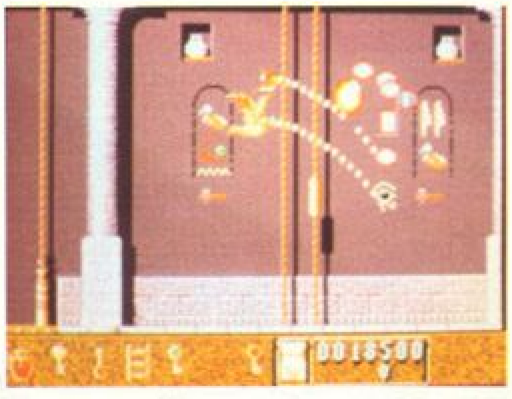
EYE OF HORUS

LOGOTRON'S Set point in ancient Egypt.

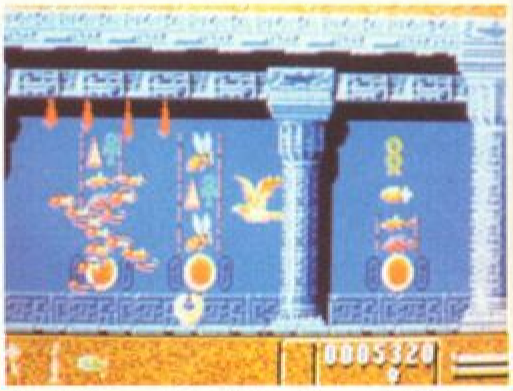
DENTON Designs have dipped into the rich pool of Egyptian mythology for this arcade-adventure-cum-shoot-em'-up for Logotron. Hero of the tale is Horus – an ancient Egyptian deity who is generally represented as half man, half hawk. Set is Horus's uncle and the brother of the good King Osiris. Consumed with jealousy, Set kills the king and later dismembers his body and scatters the seven pieces of the corpse throughout an ancient tomb.

This is where the game takes up the story. Cast as Horus, you must find the seven pieces of papa and reassemble him to rid the world of your wicked uncle. Once the body is reassembled the gods will give you extra powers and you can set out to vanquish Set. Your hawkish nature manifests itself as an ability to change from human to hawk at the touch of a button.



Seven amulets can be carried with Horus as he travels – from a possible thirty.

The first thing that strikes you is the effectiveness of the scene-setting. A definite flavour of ancient Egypt comes through in the sounds and graphics of the various rooms of the tomb. The next positive thing about the game is the on-screen mapping that unfolds as you explore. Purists (and the editor of the ACE T'n'T pages) may complain that it spoils the fun, but we reckon it makes the game immediately more satisfying without losing any of the challenge. As game-styles develop, it's about time we had a bit more development of the user interface, and on-screen mapping is a start, at least. Why should you have to turn to paper, pens, and compasses in the computer age?



Amulets are based on the real thing as discovered in the British Museum. Denton Designs are back with a bang with a 'shoot 'em up adventure' of rare quality.

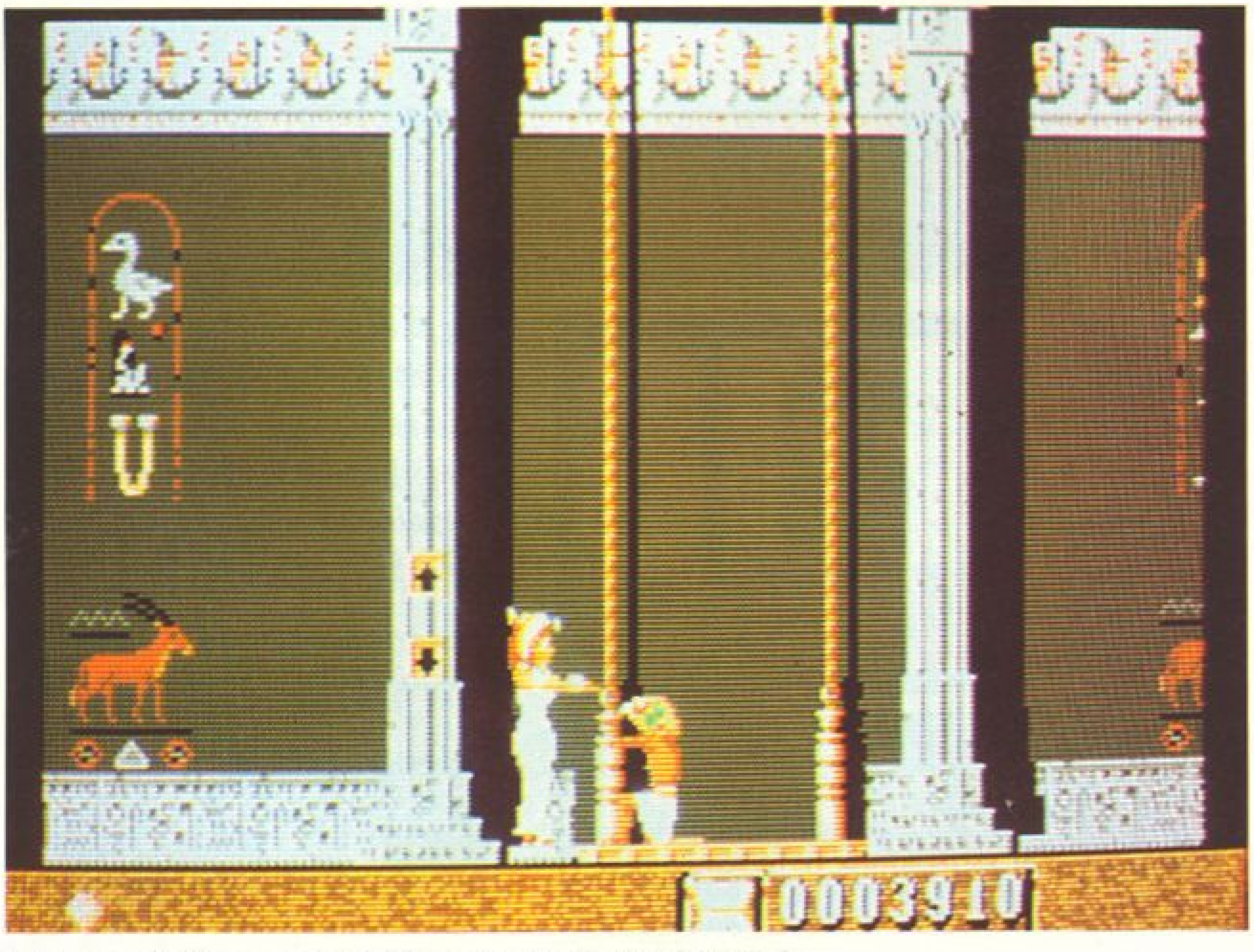
To use the map, however, you have to first find the right amulet. This is not easy as there are about thirty different ones scattered throughout the rooms of the chambers - many of them are hidden by Set to make your task more difficult. Each amulet offers a different power and you will have to learn and master all of them if you are to complete the quest.

The instructions tell you about some of the amulets but many are left unexplained for your own experimentation. In true arcade-adventure fashion, Horus can only carry seven objects at a time – so it is important to work out your own hierarchy of amulets. The map is of course essential and extra weapons are also extremely useful. The Frog amulet gives Horus a new life.

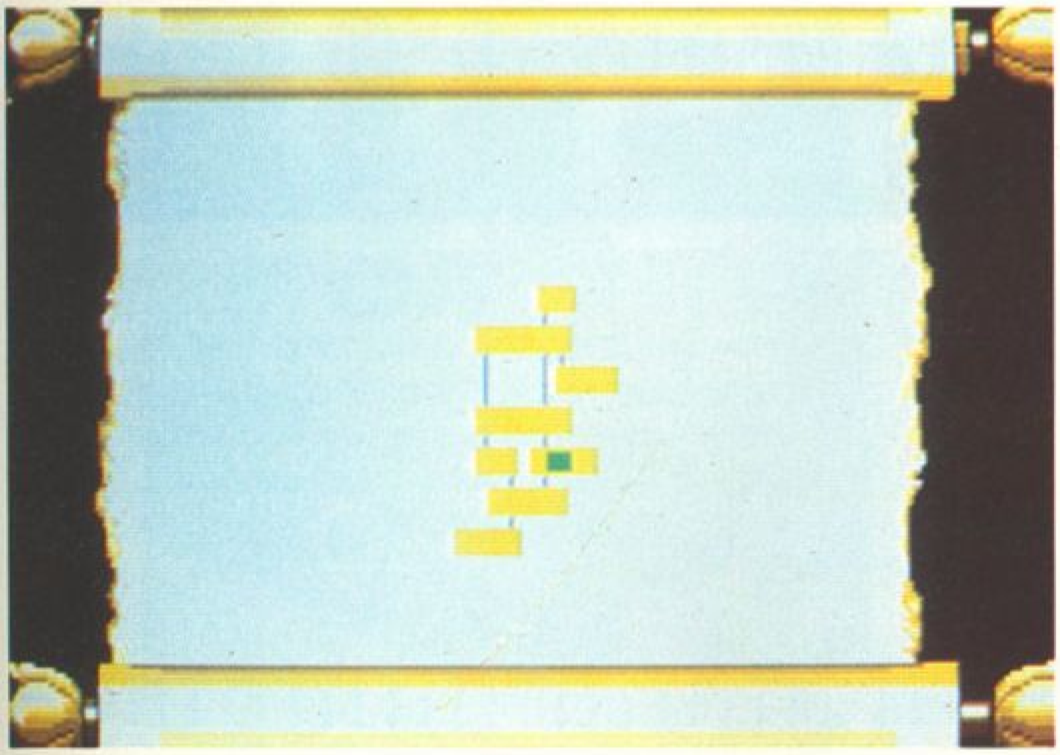
The best amulets to look at, however, are those that summon the other God's. The Heart amulet summons the god Isis – wife of the King and Horus' mother. She appears in a shimmer and then takes away any piece of the body of Osiris that you may have collected so far to the Burial Chamber. You have to summon Isis each time you recover a piece of body as you can only hold one at a time pending its reassembly. Nice touch this – really makes you feel as if the gods are watching over you.

Another god who can be made to come down from the heavens is Anubis – the god of the dead. Anubis will help you in the final conflict with Set.

Don't get the impression that this is just another arcade-adventure, however. What really spices up the action are the strong elements of shoot-'em-up throughout the game. Horus is armed with



Isis appears to take a part of Osiris's body off to the Burial Chamber.



The map is drawn for you as you travel. Why don't all arcade adventures do this?

Papyrus darts that he spits from his beak at Set's nasties – other amulets that Set has brought to life and which swirl around the chamber, sapping your energy each time you bump into one.

True to current shoot-em-up philosophy, there are certain power-ups that can multiply the rate of fire by up to four times. There is even an *R-Type*-like satellite - in this case a baby hawk that flies alongside Horus, spitting darts at the opposition. Another amulet will give you a constant arc of fire – which is more or less essential in some of the tougher chambers. There are also 'smart bomb' amulets – but as is the nature of these weapons they can only be used sparingly.

Linking the chambers is a network of lifts. Horus must fly to the ground and turn back into a man to use the lifts. He may also need one of the keys dotted around the chambers to operate them. These lifts seem to be the one design fault in the game – and not just because they're anachronistic and would look more at home in a trendy department store than ancient Egypt. More importantly, they slow down game-play. It is very easy to inadvertently send Horus up or down on a lift when you really meant him to take off in Hawk mode. What makes this worse is that while the lift is working the computer is drawing the next chamber – so it can take quite a few seconds to get there, and then you have to get all the way back...

On the whole, however, *Eye* benefits from design discipline. The programmers stick to their chosen Egyptian theme throughout (apart from those lifts), resisting the temptation to throw in an alien here and there just because there is enough memory left, and just because that is the wacky, avant-garde kind of guys they are.

Perhaps most important of all, the balance of puzzling and arcade play is just right in *Eye of Horus*. There is no set way of completing the quest, avoiding the tedious repetition of finding objects and using them to get to that part of the game that still remains to be solved.

For all its polish, though, *Eye of Horus* breaks no new ground. It is reminiscent of the old Ultimate Play the Game titles for the Spectrum and 64. But those were great games and the comparison has to be almost as flattering as it is critical. What *Eye* does do for the first time is bring well thought-out, excellently programmed, carefully designed arcade-adventure to the 16bit machines – and with a spot of blasting to boot. There seems no reason why Logotron shouldn't launch a whole range of these – just as Ultimate did.

Eugene Lacey

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£24.99dk	OUT NOW
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C64/128	£9.99cs • £14.99dk	OCTOBER
IBM PC	£29.99dk	IMMINENT

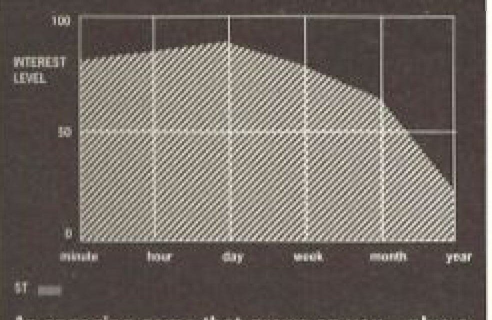
ST VERSION

Eye of Horus scrolls smoothly in four directions. Full marks to Logotron for providing sound FX and music simultaneously. It's so nice not to have chose one or the other. The Egyptian stye music adds to the atmosphere of a game that makes good use of the ST's sound and graphics potential.

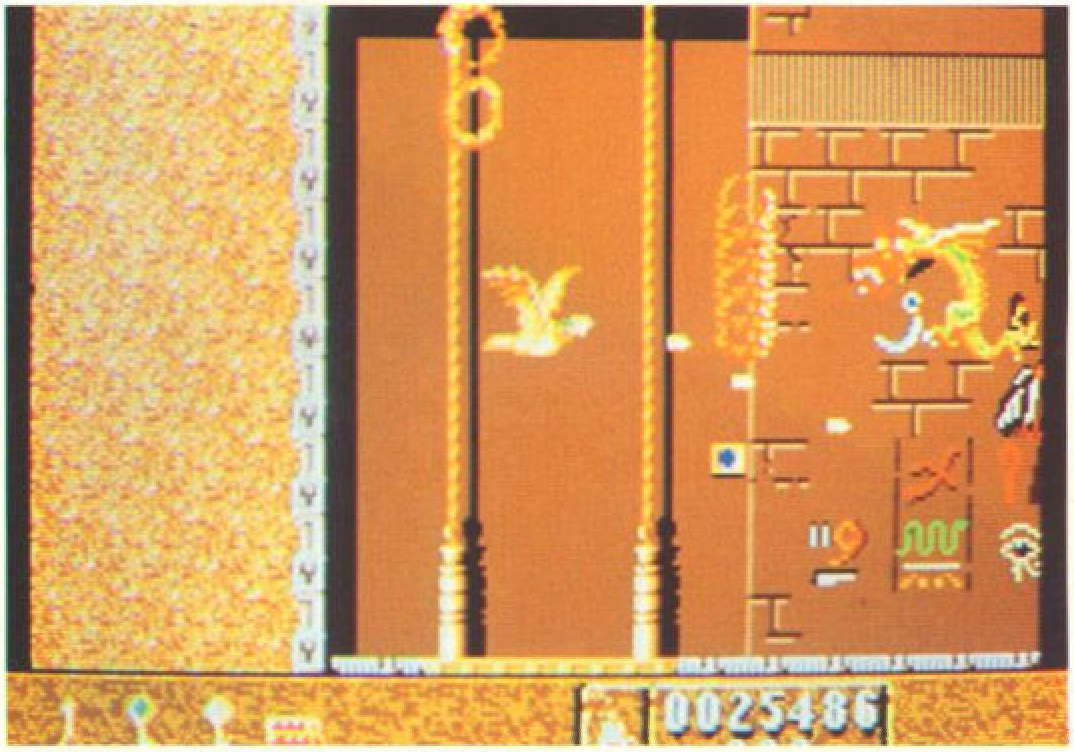
GRAPHICS	**8**	**IQ FACTOR**	**8**
AUDIO	**7**	**FUN FACTOR**	**7**

ACE RATING 885

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



An engaging game that grows on you – plus a shoot-em-up element that will maintain some interest even after you've cracked it.



Face to face with the serpent Set. You will need all of your power-ups to see this one off. Kill him and you've won the game.

DENTON REVIVAL

Game development houses are like magazines. They are 'in' one minute and out the next. The current fashion leaders are The Bitmap Brothers (Xenon I,II and Speedball), Argonaut (Star glider I,II, and Afterburner), and Graftgold (Uridium, Flying Shark, and Rainbow Islands). Denton Designs used to be flavour of the month with games like Shadowfire, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, and Gift From the Gods amongst their many hits. Eye of Horus should rocket them back back to the top of the popularity charts.

UMS II

UMS II is the definitive military campaign simulation. Rainbird have taken the theme of the original UMS and developed it into a truly Universal Military Simulation. Battle it out across the whole spectrum of military combat, from drawn out campaigns across continents, down to individual theatre battles in either of the two World Wars. Alternatively, create your own world and armed forces and fight for world domination in a totally new environment.

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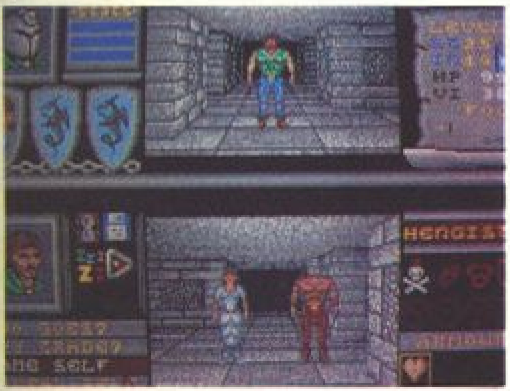
BLOODWYCH

Image Works introduce two player role playing

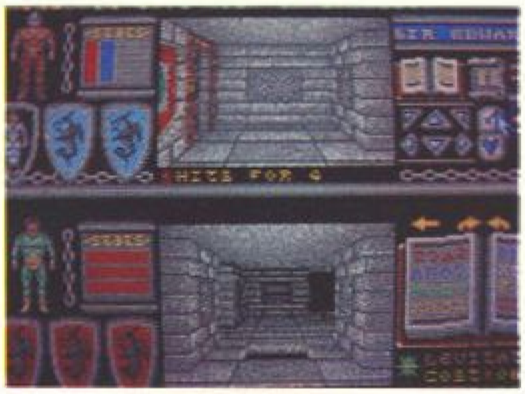
DUNGEON MASTER is the game that marked the rebirth of Mirrorsoft. It ended a lacklustre period for the Maxwell owned games house that saw few releases of any merit. Since *Dungeon Master* they haven't looked back with a string of hits including *Falcon*, *Speedball*, *Oids* and *TV Sports Football*. *Bloodwych* may be the firm's boldest step since the rebirth began. A game in the style of *Dungeon Master* from the same company has to be at least as good as its predecessor.



Bloodwych's split screen display for two player RPG'ing. The heart of the game.

The game spec promises a great deal more than *Dungeon Master*. Simultaneous two player fantasy role playing is possible for the first time. You can play as a team against the computer or against each other in a race to complete the quest. Each player chooses one of sixteen wizards, adventurers, warriors and thieves to join them in the quest.

The objective of *Bloodwych* is to destroy the evil Zendick by finding four crystals and taking them to the tower to destroy them. The quest begins in the land of Treihadwyl where you must first first recruit champions and collect the items you will need to complete the quest.



Icons control everything including battle, interaction and movement.

Just as in *Dungeon Master* moves are implemented by selecting and using icons. There are several of these so it is essential to read the manual thoroughly and master the use of the icons before setting out to complete the game. You have to be prepared to invest a bit of time and effort before you will start to derive role playing satisfaction from *Bloodwych*.

Many strange characters and artifacts are encountered in the quest like the missiles that certain characters can use by clicking on the runes in the spell book. A range of spells are available for the heroes to use.

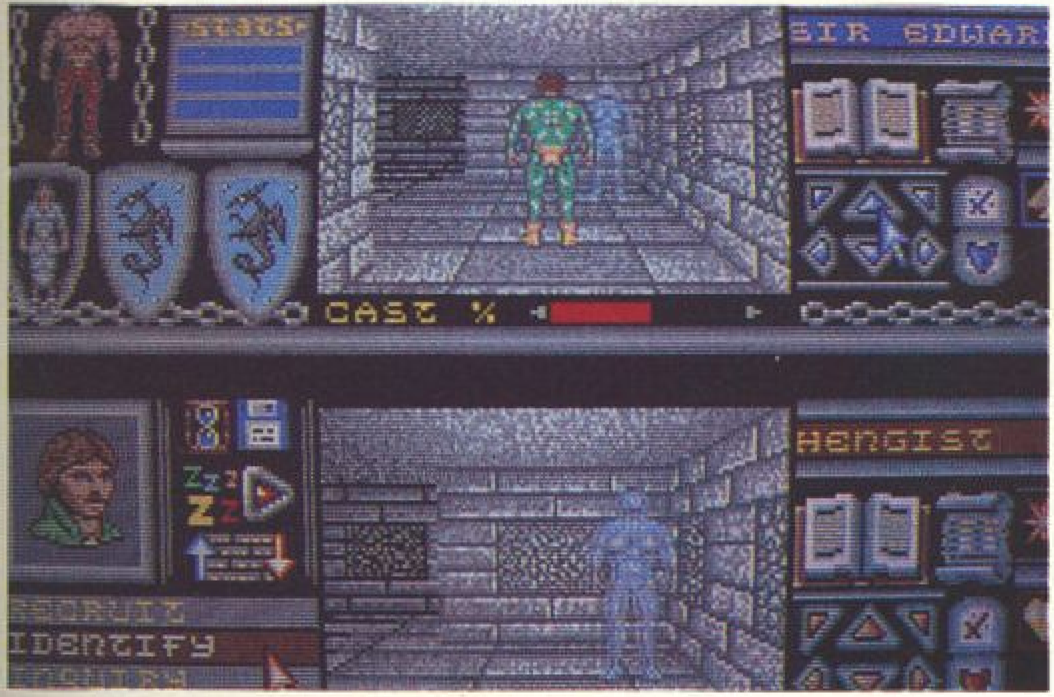
Manipulation of the characters that you encounter in your travels is the key to success in *Bloodwych*. It is essential to glean as much as you can from them using the 'trade,bribe, threaten, insult and bribe'. The questioning part of *Bloodwych* seems to work well. There is a convincing feeling of interacting with the other characters in the game.

When you are happy with your team you can then set out to solve the quest, i.e. give Zendick a good seeing to. Certain characters can be placed at strategic points using the 'Wait' icon. To know what is and what is not a strategic point a map is essential. The cavernous dungeon corridors of *Bloodwych* all look very similar and it is easy to wander aimlessly around in circles. 'View' lets you flip between characters – bringing good warriors to the forefront when you encounter one of Zendick's ghouls in some dank forsaken dungeon, or bringing a wizard into the action when a spell is required.

Bloodwych has all of the depth, health and status ratings on characters, icons galore, and detailed graphics that players have come to expect in quality RPG's since *Dungeon Master*. There have indeed been quite a few attempts to out Dungeon Master *Dungeon Master*. Most of these attempts have been embarrassing failures. *Bloodwych* comes closest of all.

It is at its best in two player mode. You and your chum against the world just as things were in *Gauntlet* – but this time in a fully blown role playing game. Not quite in the *Dungeon Master* class but an absorbing and challenging game in its own right with plenty of its own original ideas.

● Eugene Lacey



The Bloodwych as drawn by cult D&D artist Chris Achillios. His first computer original.

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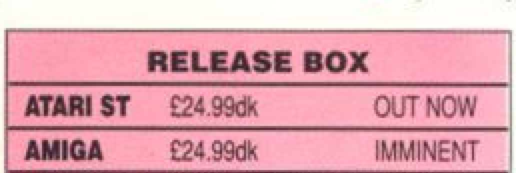
ST VERSION

The ST's hi-res display comes into its own in the display of some of the small but highly detailed icons. Graphics are colourful and the animation works crisply. Sound FX add to the eeriness of the dungeons and battle scenes.

GRAPHICS	8	**IQ FACTOR**	9
AUDIO	7	**FUN FACTOR**	7

ACE RATING 819

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Bloodwych provides lasting solo play. A good few months worth – and then gains a new lease of life as a two player game.

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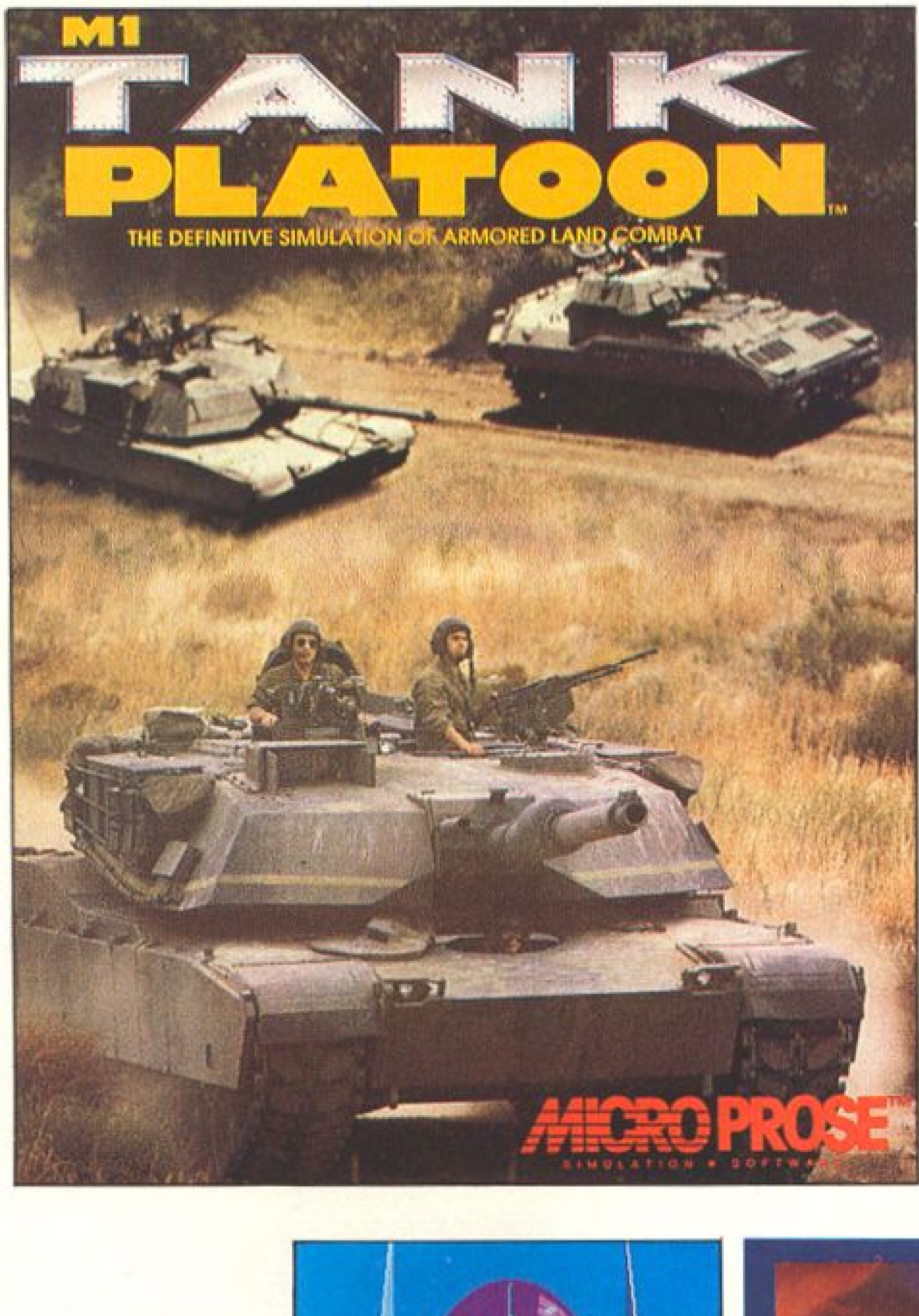

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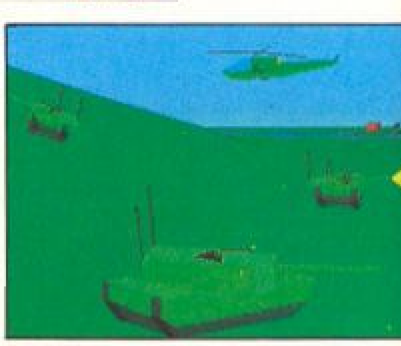
TANK
PLATOON

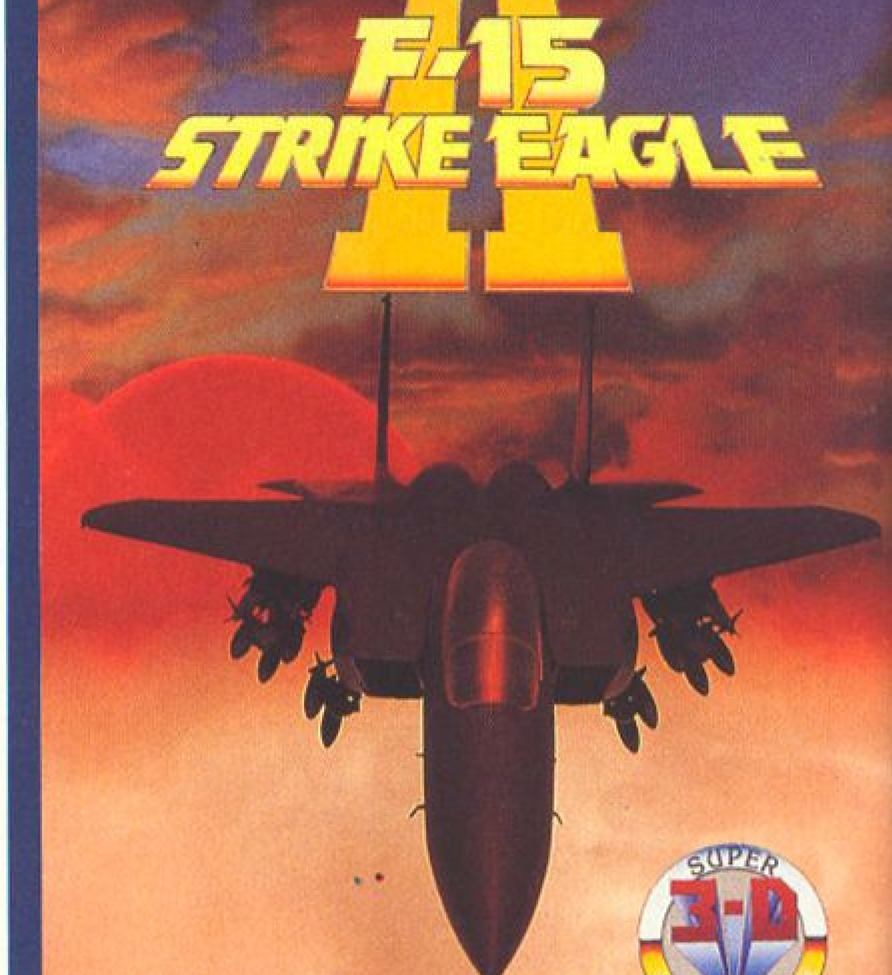


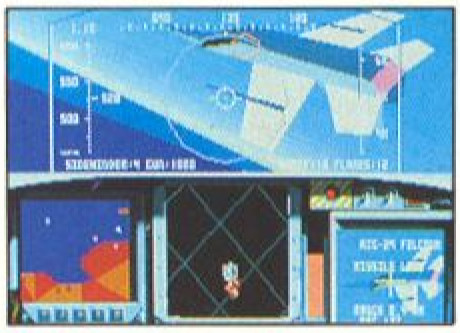
M1 Tank Platoon is the definitive simulation of armoured land combat. US tank platoons have four M1s. Four soldiers operate each tank. That's four tanks, sixteen men. And you control the whole shooting match.

16,000 acres of rolling, superb 3D terrain allows you to hide yo tanks behind hills and ridges, just as a real tank commander would. Give orders to your entire platoon or to individual tanks. Lay down some heavy artillery or mortar fire before advancing your main tanks, or possibly call in air support in the form of A1 Tankbusters or AH64 Apache Gunships. Defend yourself again attack from the air by strategically positioning anti-aircraft batteries. The strategic permutations are endless!

With thousands of battlefields and millions of situations, there i infinite variation within the game. With varied skill levels allowin games for novice through to top notch, veteran tank commanders, take on single battles or wage war from start to finish.

M1 Tank Platoon. All the action of armoured land combat.





F15 Strike Eagle II is a whole new concept in computer air warfare. Dogfighting is the name of the game. The air swarms with enemy aircraft. Dice with death as you light your burners and head for the skies. Success depends on making the right moves – fast. Super smooth, non-stop action takes place over 250,000 square miles of authentic terrain. Superb, solid-filled polygon-based 3D graphics makes it feel as though you really are in the thick of the action. Hundreds of options, four difficulty levels and a vast amount of missions and scenarios make F15 Strike Eagle II perfect for dogfighting veterans and novices alike.

MICROPROSE
SIMULATION • SOFTWARE

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SHUFFLEPUCK CAFE

DOMARK/BRODERBUND pucker up...

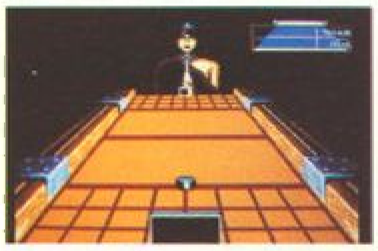
THERE are some games that promise much more than they actually deliver. Broderbund's latest offers a sports simulation of sorts, a bizarre set of opponents, good sound, excellent graphics and plenty of variable options yet manages to be less than the sum total of its parts.

The game is *Shufflepuck*, which is basically air hockey played without goals. Instead each player has a glass plate between him and the table to defend. Should he or she miss the puck the glass is shattered and a point is lost.

The simplicity of the game is spiced up with a neat scenario which transports it into a sci-fi setting. Played in a cafe somewhere on the furthest reaches of the galaxy, it's a cross between the sleazy bar in Star Wars and Milliways, the restaurant at the end of the universe in Hitchhiker's Guide. The regulars are a pretty mixed bunch, united only by their love of shufflepuck.

Wandering into this dive in search of a telephone you find yourself locked in a tournament with eight of the shufflepuck crazies that frequent the bar. The game loads with an animated still of the locals and you can get into a match by clicking on one of the various pug-ugly faces. Once into a match you can select attacking or defensive modes for the paddles. This involves giving you more bounce from the puck or power in striking. To add extra interest to the game you can also select a blocker which allows you to insert an obstacle between you and the opponent.

The set up over, you can start to take on some of the weirdos. Each has a particular character and skill level. At one end there's the bespectacled wimp Skip Feeney who bears more than a passing resemblance to Woody Allen and is a total pushover, and at the other there's Biff Raunch, a hell's angel with a vile temper. In between there's an array of opponents including a lounge lizard (yes literally) with a taste for blue champagne, and Princess Bejin who has a neat mental approach to the game – she doesn't hit the puck when she serves, she waves her hand over it.



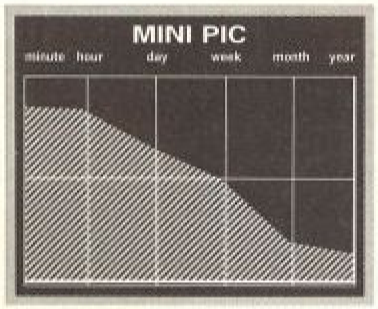
Looks pretty; plays..hmmm.

In fact much of the variation in the game comes from the characters you find sitting at the other end of the table. Their reactions to winning, losing and letting in goals add a great deal to the game. *Shufflepuck* itself is pretty average, something not helped by the lack of a two player option. Air hockey is air hockey no matter how much you try and tart it up.

The presentation for *Shufflepuck Cafe* is excellent. It's good to look at, with large, imaginatively drawn characters. They're neatly animated too, with good facial expressions and reactions. The comic touches are well observed, with some nice moments – like when Lexan Smythe-Worthington slumps under the table, rat-arsed, with a crash after losing. Sound, too, is good with a solid puck sound and a nice sampled smash when you score. In fact that provides much of the appeal of playing a game.

The early appeal of good graphics and sound is dulled by the limitations of the gameplay. Were *Shufflepuck* one of a number of games on a multi-sports simulation I'd say it was a highlight, but not on its own.

● Mike Pattenden



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GRAPHICS 9 IQ FACTOR 5 AUDIO 9 FUN FACTOR 8

ACE RATING 695

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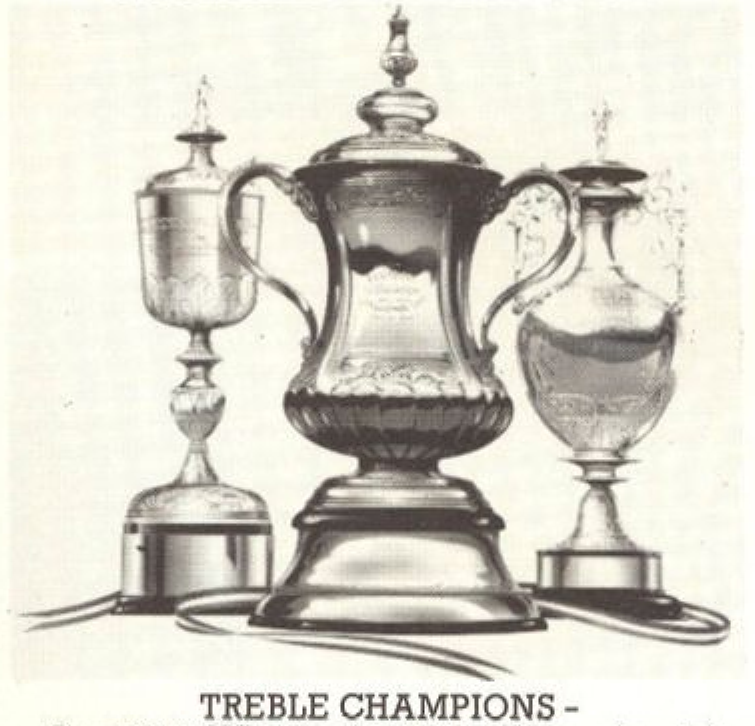

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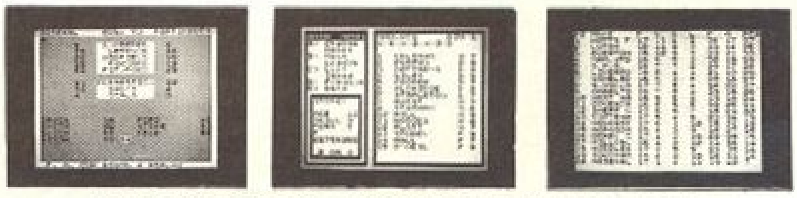

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ALL POINTS BULLETIN

DOMARK send out an All Points Bulletin

IN the arcade wars nowhere is the battle for coins tougher than in the racing game category. There are very slim pickings for second place. Gamers who pump dosh in to racing games seek out the fastest, newest, prettiest machines around. Tengen enjoyed a good run at the top slot with *APB* – a racing game that added a touch of humour and a cops and robbers scenario as a hook to the main business of racing through the streets.

You are officer Bob for a week on a mission to cruise the streets of a downtown American city picking up as many villains as you can. You are given a quota of the number of criminals to be arrested – which you must meet if you are keep your job, i.e. stay in the game.

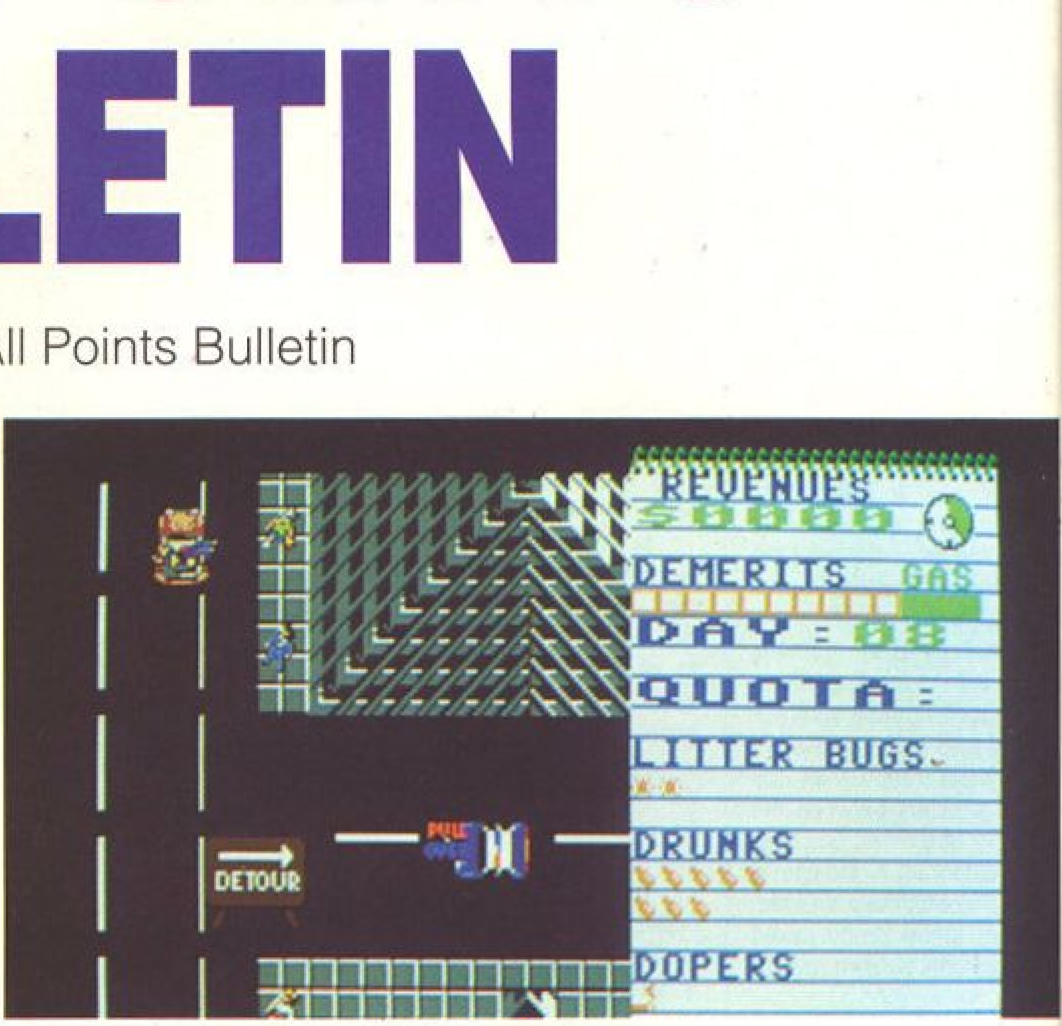
The graphical feel of the coin-op has been faithfully reproduced. It has a cartoon flavour about it – something that seems to be the hallmark of Tengen games since *Xybots* and *Vindicators*. Bright colours are also very much in evidence, particularly in the driving scenes and criminal questioning screens back at the station.

The game presents an overhead view of the action with the screen split into two sections. In the left two thirds of the screens is your squad car and the scrolling road. The right hand side shows the score board, listing your arrests so far today, revenues collected, and time left to reach your quota.

Your squad car can be souped up by paying a visit to the Speed Shop. Here you can purchase radar, armour, better brakes and improved acceleration. You will need money to pay for these items, though, and to get it you must outperform your daily quotas.

There are a number of ways of getting cash. Picking up hitch-hikers, litter bugs, and drunks pays a few dollars – but the way to earn real money is to go after the arch-villains. Sid Sniper and Freddy Freak are the meanest dudes on the block and you will occasionally get an APB (All Points Bulletin) from HQ to apprehend them.

This is where the real fun begins. To arrest them you must position your Steering Wheel Cursor over their car then switch on your siren. They may not stop immediately so you have to be ready to give chase. But as every cop will tell you, chasing criminals through a built up area is a highly dangerous business. You are the hero if you catch them but should you crash – injuring a member of the public in the process – then your head will be on the chopping block. Demerit points are deducted from your score in this event. Get too many of these and you're fired.



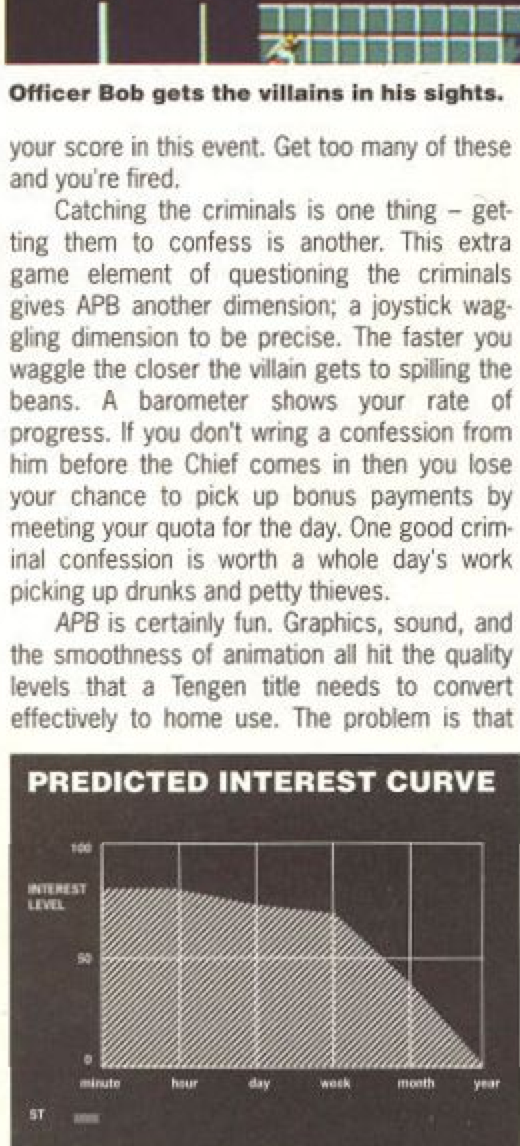
Officer Bob gets the villains in his sights.

Catching the criminals is one thing – getting them to confess is another. This extra game element of questioning the criminals gives APB another dimension; a joystick waggling dimension to be precise. The faster you waggle the closer the villain gets to spilling the beans. A barometer shows your rate of progress. If you don't wring a confession from him before the Chief comes in then you lose your chance to pick up bonus payments by meeting your quota for the day. One good criminal confession is worth a whole day's work picking up drunks and petty thieves.

APB is certainly fun. Graphics, sound, and the smoothness of animation all hit the quality levels that a Tengen title needs to convert effectively to home use. The problem is that the basic game design is not really suited to the hours, days, and weeks of play that a home computer game needs to justify its price tag. At 20p for a few minutes entertainment APB works fine as a coin-op. At £20 to play it at home on your Amiga or ST I am not so sure. If you were totally addicted to the coin-op go for it. If not – try before you buy is ACE's advice.

● Eugene Lacey

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



An entertaining and amusing arcade game that will provide a few weeks of fun; but there's not enough there to make it a classic.

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
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ATARI ST VERSION

Bright colours are the hallmarks of Tengen titles and the ST does well to reproduce this feature of the coin-op. Sound FX are fine – particularly the siren that screams out when you attempt to arrest the villains.

GRAPHICS	**8**	**IQ FACTOR**	**6**
AUDIO	**7**	**FUN FACTOR**	**8**

ACE RATING 762

TURBO

MICROILLUSIONS rev up for death race 1989

MICROILLUSIONS were a software house that promised great things when they first came to most people's attention by coding the game *Faery Tale* - given away free with the first first batch of Amiga 500's off the production line.

A *Gauntlet*-style adventure that scrolled smoothly in four directions, *Faery Tale* was an early demonstration of the graphical excellence that could be achieved on the Amiga. Gameplay was iffy - but as a foretaste of things to come the game was a milestone. The strangest thing of all is that after *Faery Tale*, Microillusions became something of an fairy tale themselves.

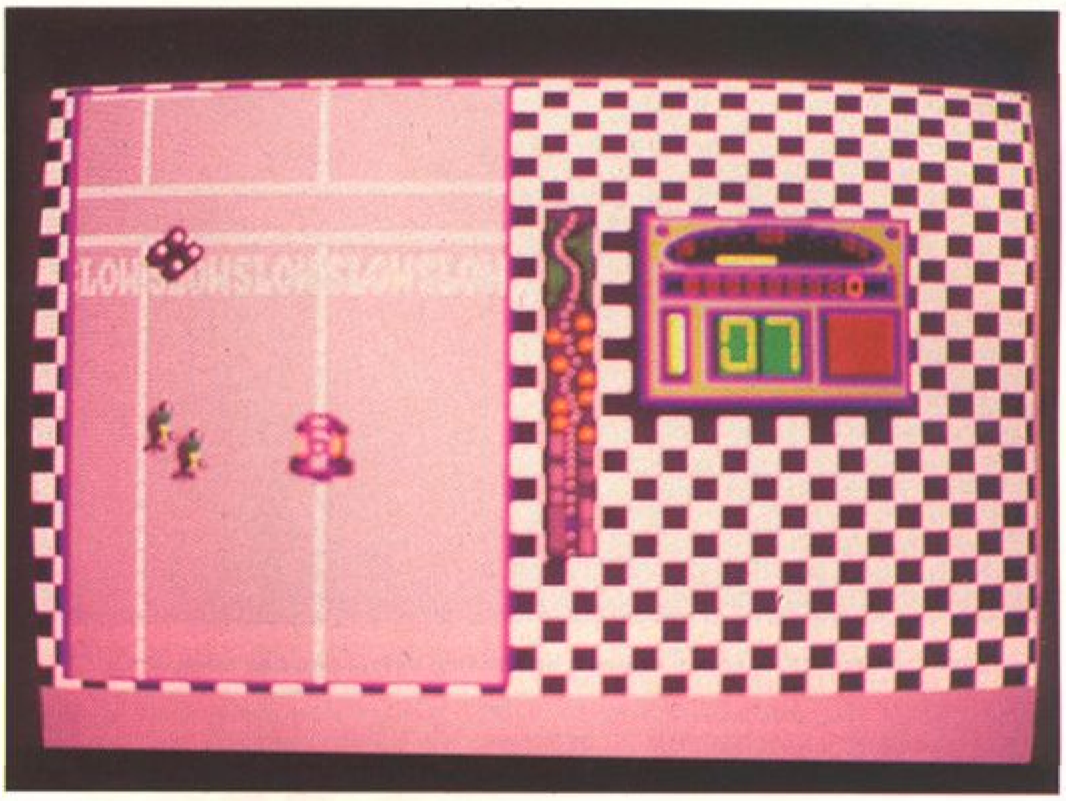
Until now, that is. They have appointed a new UK distributor and are back with a new racing game called...*Turbo*.

The instructions are sparse – 'You have just entered a death race with no rules and no judges' – and the aim is correspondingly simple: to get to the end of the course and kill off as many other road users as possible without getting nicked by the cops.

The gameplay is viewed from above, as in the coin-op game *Championship Sprint* though *Turbo* has a linear track rather than a circuit. The left hand portion of the screen is the action window with your speedometer and progressive map of your progress to the right.

It is essential to pick up the various weapons that are scattered around the road ways. You get these by driving into them. The missiles, grenades, and oil are most effective for seeing off your opponents - but have to be used sparingly or the police will make chase sirens blazing.

The race track takes you through three levels - town, country and desert and you are racing against the clock to reach the finish. There are many hazards to be avoided: level crossings and roundabouts loom up in front of you in a split second, so it's a good job that your car can break quickly to avoid these hazards. In fact it can be made to break and accelerate even more rapidly by picking up the wheel power-ups.

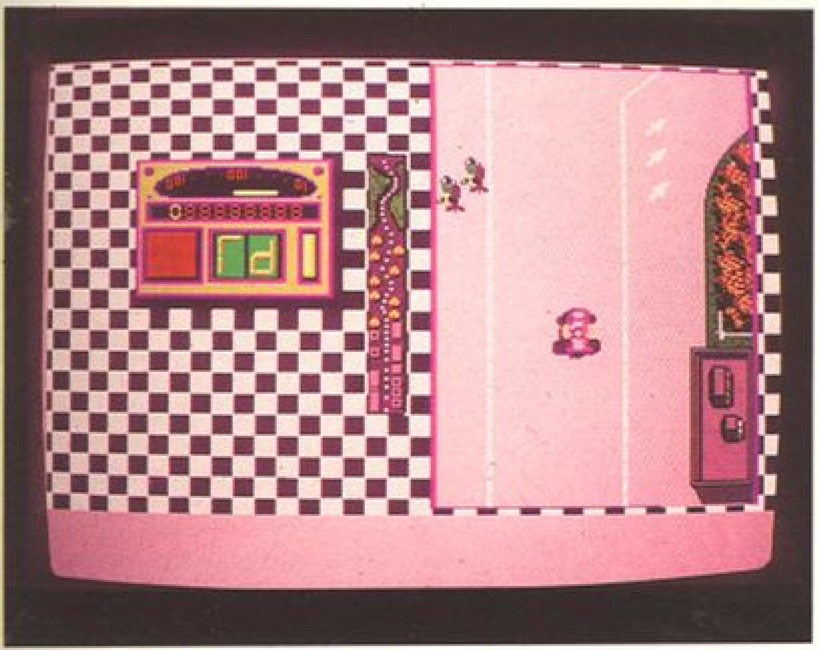


Watch out for that train!

In the town section of the game several pedestrians are represented by tiny dots making their way across the streets. Mow any off these down and they become larger red dots as the computer emits a horrifying scream.

Sound FX are generally impressive throughout. I particularly liked the throaty acceleration sound and breaking noises as you screech to a halt in front of an obstacle. The police sirens are also authentic sounding as cop cars attempt to bump you off the road for mowing down too many pedestrians.

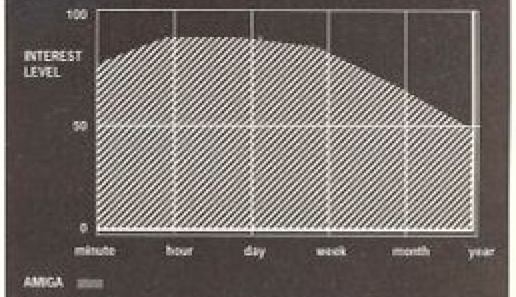
Just one thing seems a bit odd. You actually lose points for mowing down pedestrians. Whatever happened to the motorists rule that you get top marks for grannies and traffic wardens?



Turbo is presented and game tested to traditionally high American standards. Three game play modes enable you to play against the computer, against a friend, or against a friend via a modem link. Computer racing fans should definitely take a look at this one.

● Eugene Lacey

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



It will take you a while to master the use of all of the weapons and power-ups. But once you do, the two player entertainment value of *Turbo* is fairly timeless.

RELEASE BOX

AMIGA	£19.95dk	OUT NOW

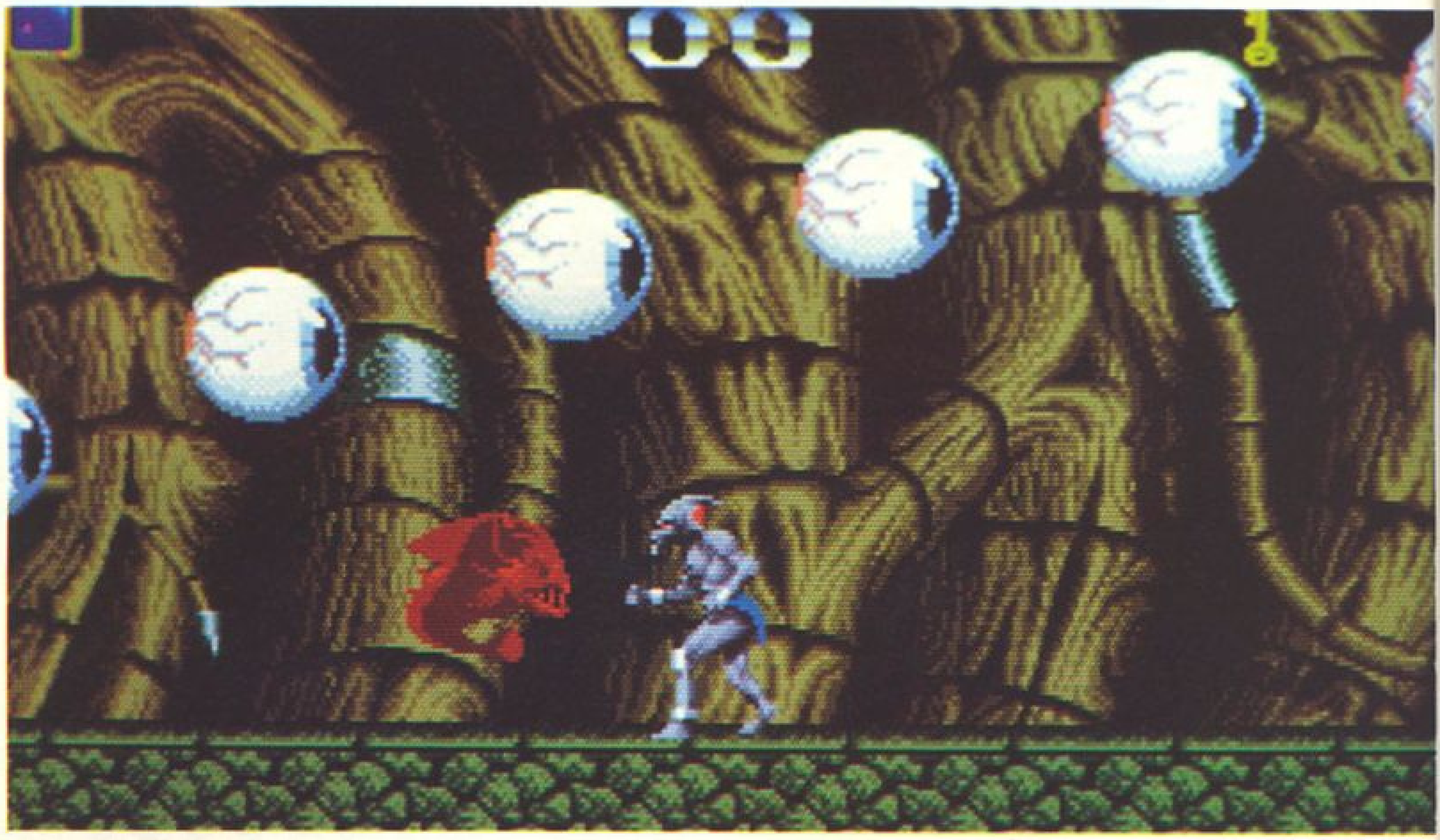
No other versions planned

AMIGA VERSION

Sound is where the Amiga is used to best effect in Turbo. The sound FX are not only impressive but, more importantly, they are well synchronised with the game play. Graphics are adequate – and could have been better.

GRAPHICS	**6**	**IQ FACTOR**	**7**
AUDIO	**8**	**FUN FACTOR**	**8**

ACE RATING 850



Keep your eyes on those, chum, or you'll be frazzled before you can blink twice!

SHADOW OF THE BEAST

PSYGNOSIS go all out for revenge

NOT content with the market they reside in, Psygnosis have decided to rock the packaging and marketing boats once more with the release of their most stunning product ever. *Beast*, or to give it it's full title, *Shadow Of The Beast* is packaged not only in an extraordinarily large box (the size of two Psyclapse boxes) with a piece of specially commissioned Roger Dean artwork, but also comes with a high quality T-shirt complete with yet another original piece of Mr Dean's. So obviously Psygnosis most have a pretty hot product to back up such a marketing gamble, right?

You're not wrong. *Beast* is certainly a very impressive game. For a start, at present it's planned as Amiga only, which means the programmers have had no ST conversion restrictions. And once you take a look at some of the statistics, you'll start to wish most other programmers would give themselves a rest from the same worries.

No less than 13 levels of smooth parallax scrolling, which is really a sight to behold. The scrolling updates 50 times a second – that's the speed of a coin-op – and there are up to 128 colours on screen at once. And that's only the start; there's the sound to be taken into consideration yet.

It's all composed by none other than Dave Whittaker and ported directly from a KORG M1 keyboard (as used by up and coming Noo Joisey rockers Saraya). There's over 900K of it which, we are reliably informed, is more than the music from the *Thunderblade* and *Afterburner* coin-ops put together. What's more, it's also some of the best work Whittaker's ever done; catchy, atmospheric and it's got that all important rock guitar sample.

The theme of the game is revenge. Stolen from your parents at their sacrifice and turned into a bestial messenger for the Beast-mages through various metamorphic potions and deep hypnotic suggestion, the Beast-mages thought they had destroyed all remnants of the human inside you. How wrong they were. The beauty within the beast has awoken, and now it's after blood for blood. The death of the master for the death of his parents.

But before he can reach the master, he has to travel through several areas, each with its own predators and its own traps. Out in the wilderness, for example, you are assailed by rampaging eagles and low flying boulders. Fur-

RELEASE BOX

AMIGA	£34.95dk	OUT NOW
No other versions planned		

AMIGA VERSION

Hard to think of a game that's better suited to a computer. Amazing parallax scrolling, incredible graphics, sound that'll make you want to buy the album – and there's a game in there as well! Not bad at all...

GRAPHICS	9	**IQ FACTOR**	6
AUDIO	9	**FUN FACTOR**	8

ACE RATING 885

ther along in the game you are assailed by such wonders as eyeballs, Psygnosis insignia and lightning.

The whole thing is played over a multi-directional scrolling playfield – and what scrolling! The 13 levels of perfect parallax are incredible to see, putting most games to shame.

Fighting back couldn't be simpler. To start with, and indeed through most of the game, he uses his developed strength and speed to merely punch the enemy away with a resounding thud. Later in the game you can pick up laser guns, stun guns and jet packs which allow you to fly all over the screen.

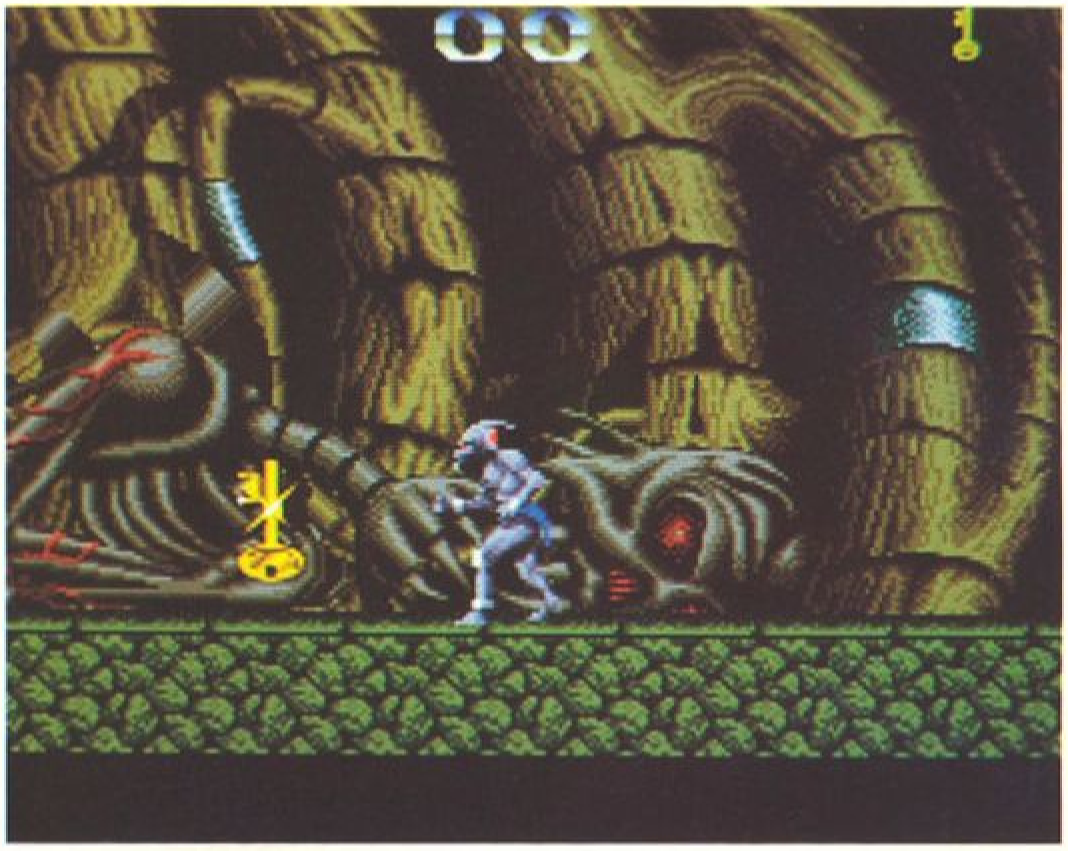
And that's not the only thing you can pick up either. By punching open certain backdrop objects such a coffins, monoliths and chests, you can find various potions. Some of them do nice things, like give you more energy and punch power, while others detract from them. The only real problem is that they all look the same. The only way of telling which is which is through good old trial and error. Thankfully, all potions remain in set places for every game, so a couple of trips through each level should be enough for you to learn which are best left alone.

All the game graphics are amazing. The backdrops are exquisitely drawn and the sprites are fairly stunning. All that plus loads of Roger Dean artwork, what more could you ask for?

Gamewise, I have to say this does feel and look ever so slightly like it's namesake *Altered Beast*. That said, there's a lot more to this, what with all these puzzles and whatnot.

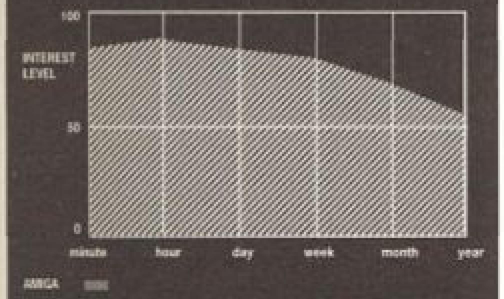
What would have been simply a fair game has been turned into an excellent one simply because the company took a little care over the product. Well done to Psygnosis. Yes, it is a little more costly than your average Amiga game, but when you think you're getting a free Roger Dean T-Shirt, can you really complain?

● Tony Dillon

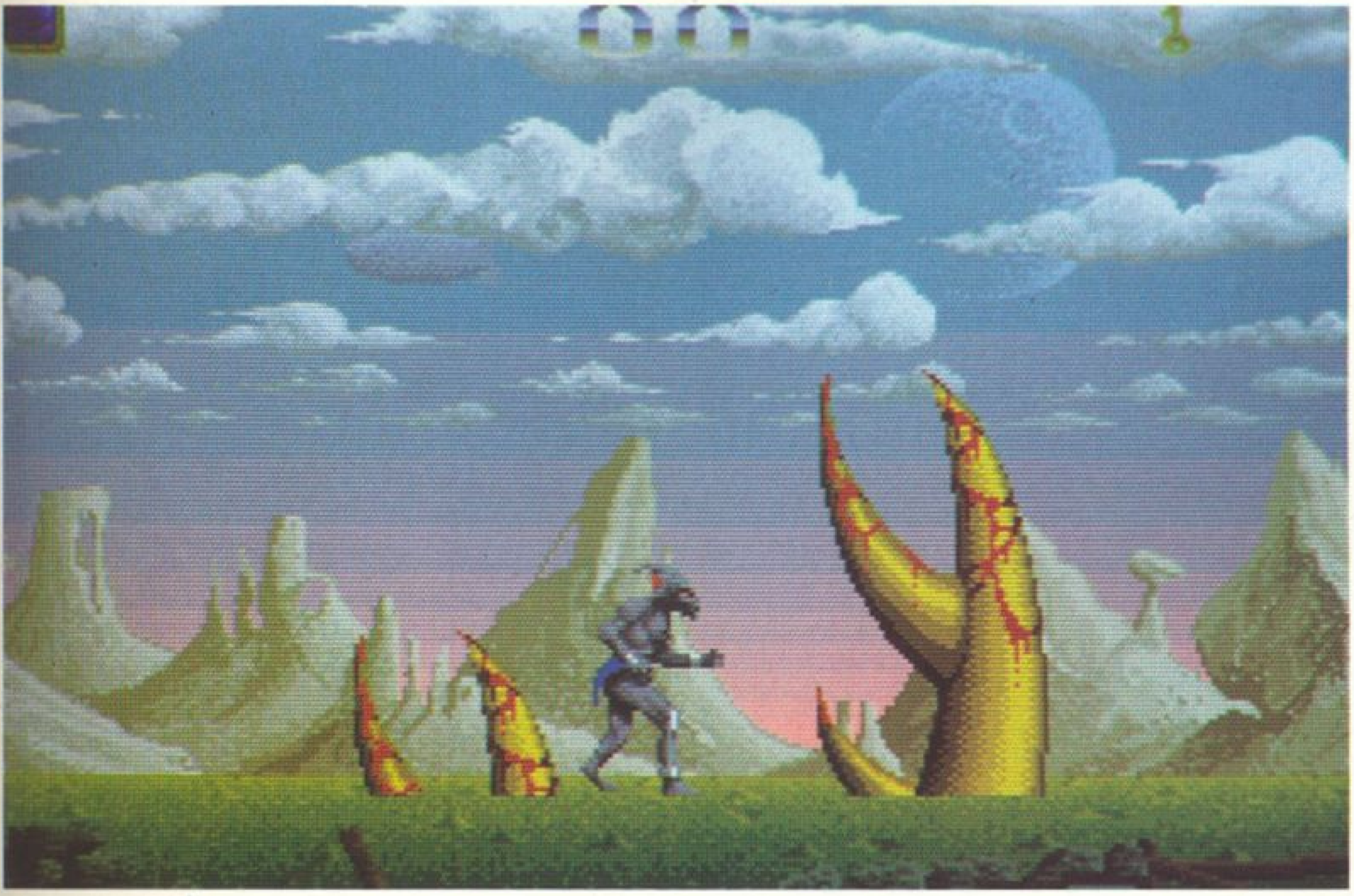


There's more to Beast than mere blasting and punching – grab that key to get on.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Graphics and sound give it instant appeal, and the size keeps you going, but like all arcade games it won't, unfortunately, last for ever...



Stunning parallax scrolling and provide a graphical presentation that's going to be hard to beat.

BATTLE VALLEY

Hewson send in the choppers and tanks

AT last a shoot 'em up with a bit more to do than simply staying alive and collecting power-ups.

The world is being held to ransom by a group of International terrorists who threaten to fire two nuclear missiles unless their colleagues are released from jails in the USA.

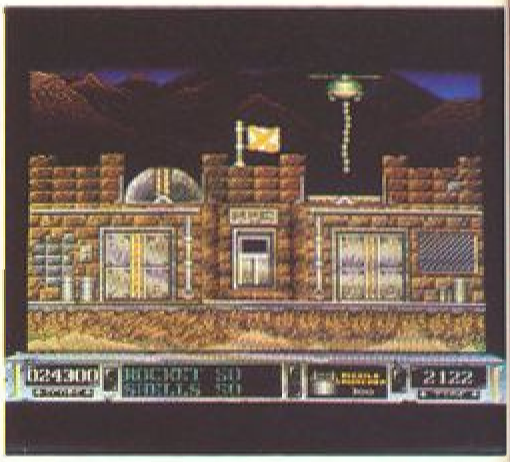
Your task is to eliminate the missiles that are holed up in the terrorists' stronghold – Battle Valley – in the middle of the desert.

Using a chopper and armoured vehicle it is down to you to battle through the terrorist defences, capture them and eliminate the missiles.

You start your mission in a chopper which emerges from a sky dome. It's a light weight attack chopper in the mold of a Lynx – with high powered missiles. But the chopper is not magically armed with an unlimited supply of missiles and fuel. You have to keep an eye on your gauges and refuel or rearm when you start running out. The rearming operation is carried out by hovering above the arms dump and letting down a chain to pick up a box of missiles and then winching them back on board. The winch is also used later in the game when you have to pick up a huge section of steel and manoeuvre it into place to repair a bridge so that your army can get through to Battle Valley to bombard the terrorists. These strategic elements make for a far more enjoyable game – reminiscent of the classic Broderbund title *Choplifter*.

Battle Valley features an impressive parallax scroll on three levels – with sky, mountain tops, and foreground all moving accurately as your chopper whizzes by.

Later in the game – when you have successfully repaired the bridges you can go back to base and hop into the armoured vehicle. Now you are ready to take on the terrorists. This section of the game is not quite as impressive graphically as the chopper sequences. The caterpillar tracks of the small tank appear to float on air at one or two points when they negotiate bumps and hillocks. It is every bit as good a blast as the aerial scenes though. Stacks of enemy ground installations must be taken out before you progress towards Battle Valley itself and the final show down, all the while dodging a fierce ground and aerial bombardment.



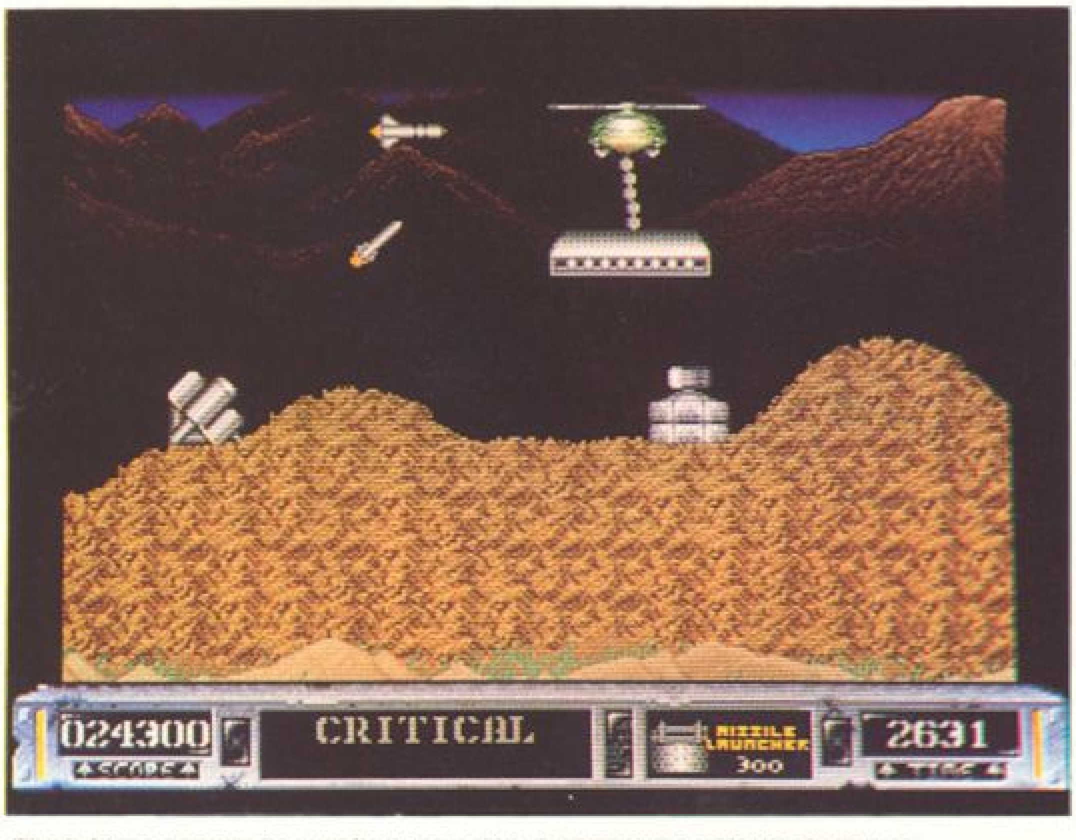
Taking on more ammunition for the shoot out with the terrorists.

Each of the missiles is protected within a separate compound so when you have destroyed one you return to HQ and then make ready to liberate the second one. Should you lose all of your lives before completing your mission you get to see the ubiquitous nuclear mushroom cloud and a message telling you have failed.

One small personal quibble: what is it about programmers that they are so fond of including the holocaust cloud in their games? We must have seen it half a dozen times in the last six months in different games. Bad taste, or what??

Anyway that grumble aside, *Battle Valley* is a deep and challenging arcade game. The time factor and strategic elements add a very welcome 'thinking' dimension to this smooth and colourful shoot 'em up.

● Eugene Lacey



The bridges need to be repaired to enable the armoured cars to get across.

AMIGA VERSION

Coded for Hewson by Creative Thought a clear mastery of Amiga graphics and sound is very much in evidence. The smoothness of the animation makes the game. Particularly in the slower parts of the game where you are manoeuvring the chopper. Excellent parallax effects and loud booming sound FX for the explosions.

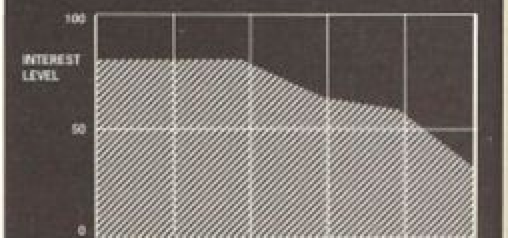
GRAPHICS	**8**	**IQ FACTOR**	**7**
AUDIO	**7**	**FUN FACTOR**	**8**

ACE RATING 815

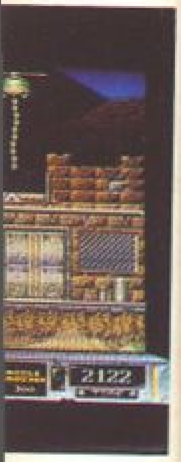
RELEASE BOX

AMIGA	£19.99dk	OCTOBER

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Entertaining and reasonably deep arcade game. The trouble is once you've beaten the terrorists you are unlikely to want to play it again.



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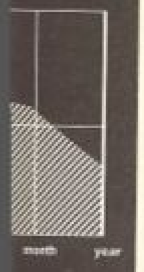

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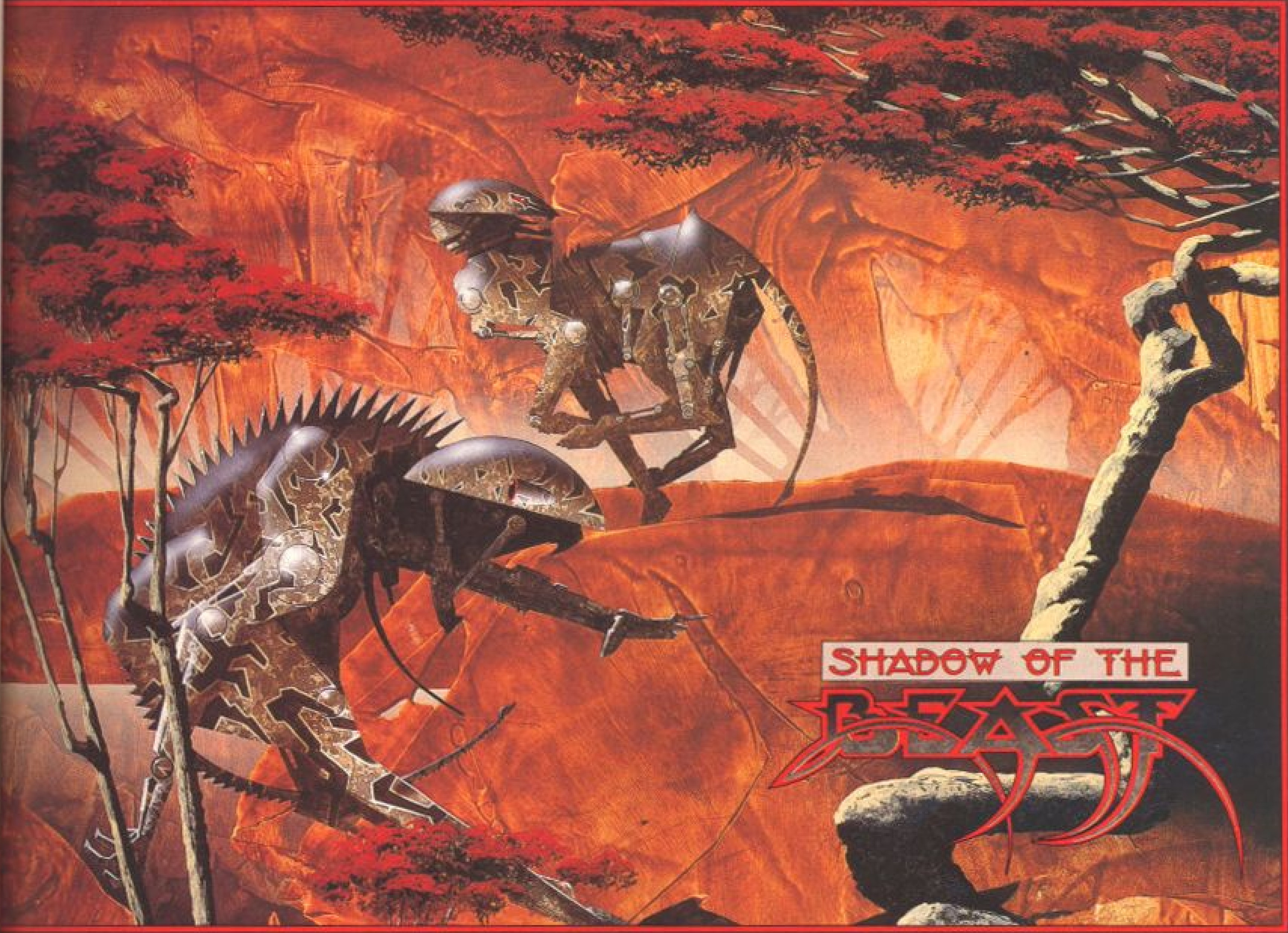

SUPERB
FREE 'T' SHIRT

ENCLOSED IN
EVERY GAME

ORIGINAL
UNIQUE ROGER DEAN
DESIGN

THE BEAST IS AMONG US

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350 screens - 132 unique monsters
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900K of emotive music
2Mb of graphics compressed in two disks.

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PSYGNOSIS - GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Screen Shots from the Amiga version

AMIGA £34.95/ATARI ST COMING SOON

BATTLETECH

Take command in this RPG/arcade combination...

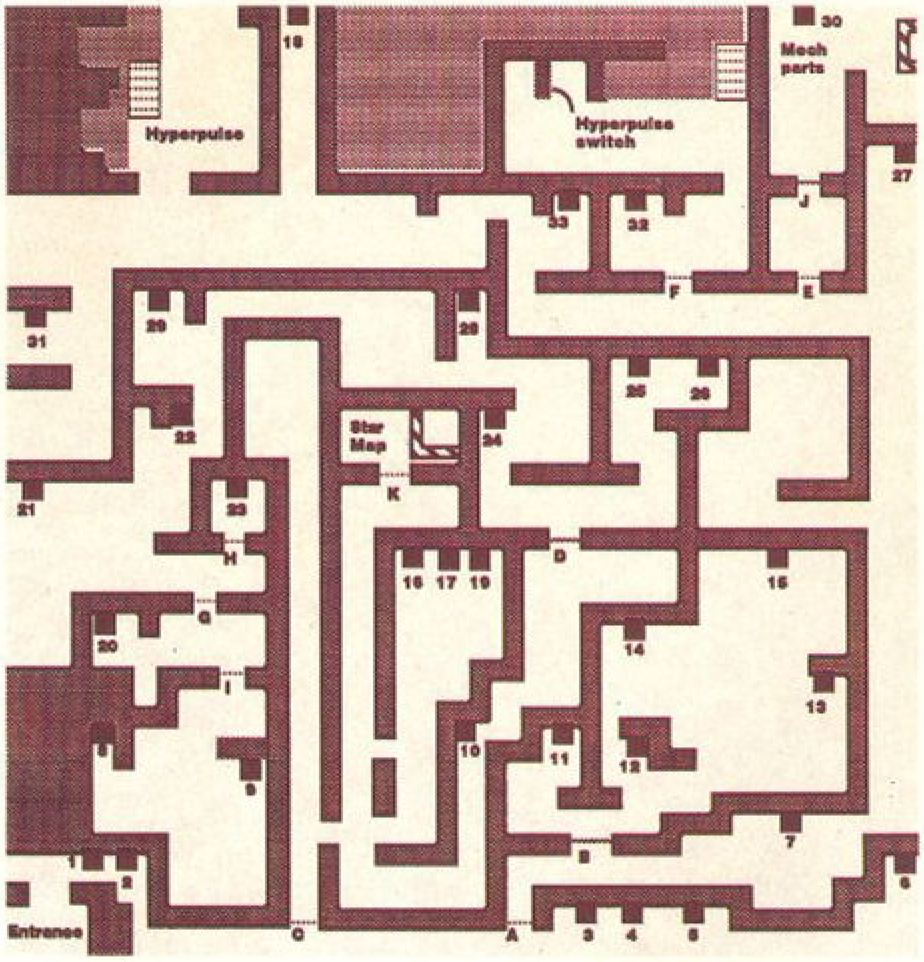
The Citadel

1. In the beginning, keep investing all current financial assets in one of the three available companies, DefHes, NasDiv or BakPharm. Be very wary with BakPharm as its value is subject to tremendous fluctuation. Clever investing will nearly double your money. It's also wise to place a large bulk of your money into a low risk account.

The accounts update every time you receive 15 C-Bills, so it's best to keep a walk around/investment routine going in the early stages.

2. When you have enough money, buy an SMG from the gunshop – even better try to purchase an Inferno; this little weapon wipes out people in one shot as well as giving you a chance to escape from enemy Mech's. Then go to the Citadel building and enrol in SMG and Mech weapon classes until you become good in both skills.

3. The next thing you need is armour. Buy a flak suit as these represent the best protection for your money.



A listing of the doors and the codes to open them: A) R1,B3,Y5; B) R2,B7,Y18; C) R15, B14, Y11; D) R13, B31, Y4; E) R25, B33, Y10; F) R28, B24, Y16; G) R29, B12, Y6; H) R20, B27, Y22; I) R17, B19, Y26; J) R8, B9, Y21; K) R30, B23, Y32

Training Missions

Don't attempt these straight away! Let your investments grow first.

Mission 1. Use a locust for this one.

Mission 2. A Chameleon as it has hands.

Mission 3. Again use a Chameleon.

Mission 4. As above.

Mission 5. Real combat! Use a Chameleon and control it yourself. Keep in forests for cover; even better stand in a lake to keep the Mech cool. Only use weapons that are in range of the enemy as this will help to prevent overheating. When the Mech has been trashed go to the lounge and talk to a character called Rick Atlas, he'll give you something very useful.

Mission 6. The same as 5, though this time split your firepower between the two Mechs.

Mission 7. Whatever you do, don't fight the Jenners. They have thicker armour and a lot more power than your Mech. Instead, turn tail and run the second the mission starts. You should find a gap in the fence a short distance above the entrance to the training ground. When you and your Mech are back in the main area of the Citadel run for the gap in the main wall which is at the bottom of the west side. If you do make it head straight for the Starport and get your Mech patched up there.

Starport

If your Mech is in good condition your might be able to handle combat with another Mech, though this is not advised at this stage. Taking on human groups however is perfectly acceptable.

Once you've entered the Starport (through the Mech park) head immediately for the clothes shop; a small oblong building close to a lake. Purchase some new clothes then head off towards the Inaugural hall. Read the text, then leave. Wander around the city for a minutes then return to the hall once more. You should now find a party going on and meet a man called Rex. Outside he will give you several things. You will then be attacked – flee!

Head for the Comstar building and withdraw 150 C-Bills. Go to the Mech park and pay the attendant, you should now have a new Mech.

Spend quite a while wandering around the nearby area avoiding combat where possible. Then return to the Starport. With a bit of luck you should have lots an lots of money in Comstar. Wit draw all but a thousand C-Bills an go to the Mechit-Lube to get you previous Mech repaired. If yo have enough money left ove soup-up both Mechs at the spee shop. Take both Mech's out at cost of 150 a piece. It is als wise to take out an apprentice ship, as this enables you to sa vage beaten up battlefield Mech to take back and repair.

The Crescent Hawks.

Head back to the ruined citade and enter the Barracks throug the hole in the north wall. The holodisk that Rex gave you wi then be played causing the inven tors hut to appear on the map.

Leave the Citadel and hea for the city NE of the Starport. G to the prison and free the cap tured Crescent Hawk. Then try t retrieve his impounded Mech. You should now have three Mech's i the party. After this go around the various cities. At the Mechit-lube's ask to apprentice – with a bit o luck you should find a Crescen Hawk. At the hospitals keep searching the medical records until you are approached by anoth er Crescent Hawk. These two should be a technician and doctor respectively. Try to get their spe cialist skills up to excellent, you'l need them later on.

When the group of five has been assembled make sure they are armed with Infernos and Fla suits – you should have more than enough money by now. If you are uneasy about somebody in your party, fight a brief battle and if he isn't in a Mech he'll be killed. Then find his replacement.

The Inventor's Hut

This is located in the NW, a long way from the Starport. When you've answered the relevant questions the inventor will appear to repair the holodisk. He will also tell you that the Starleague cache is to the SE, in a cave, on a island.

The Starleague Cache

The map of the Starleague centre shows all the code terminals, doors and important features nec essary to complete the game. The codes for all the doors are found in a list from A to K at the top of the map.

In order to finish the game you must open all the doors, find

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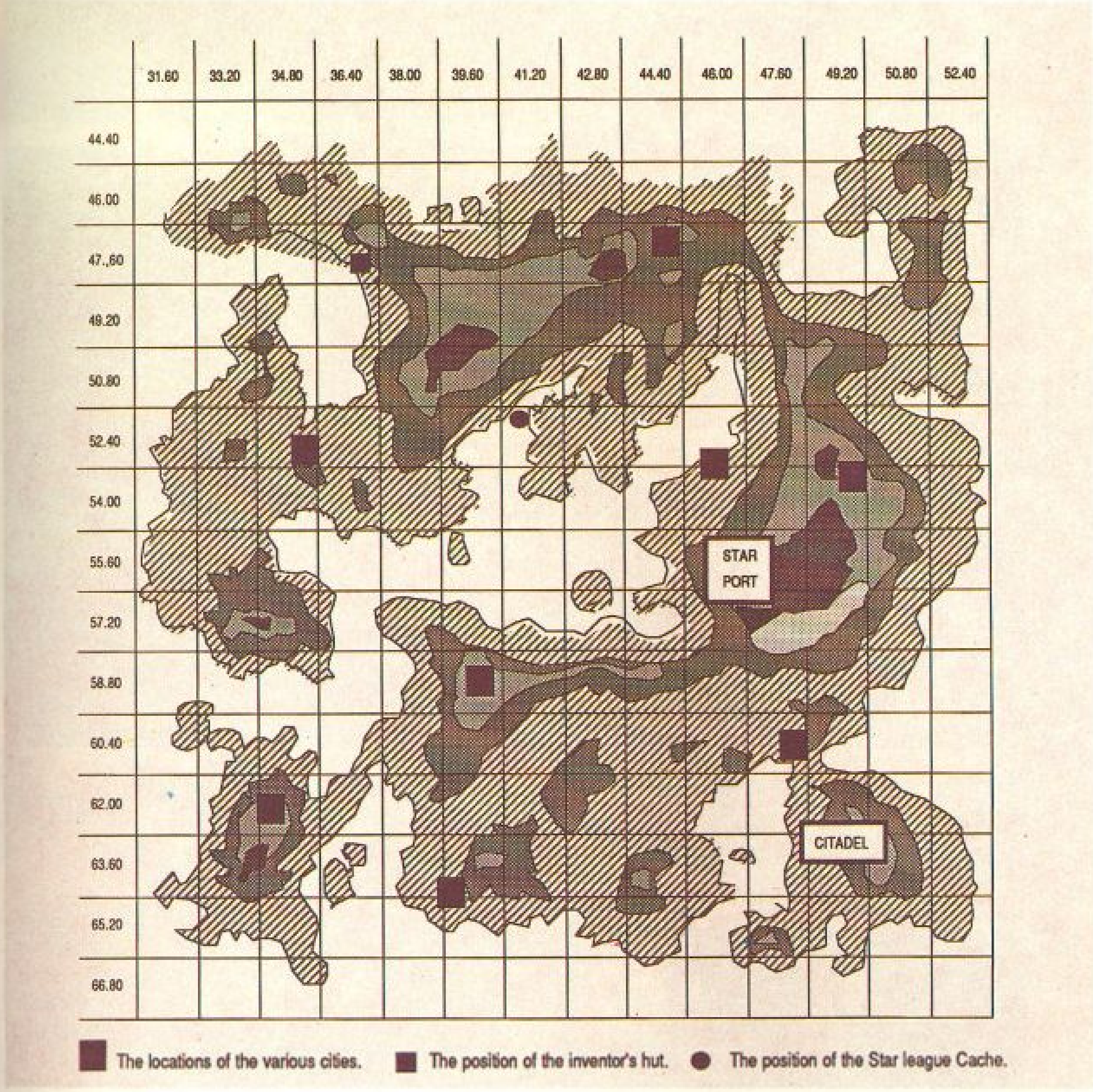
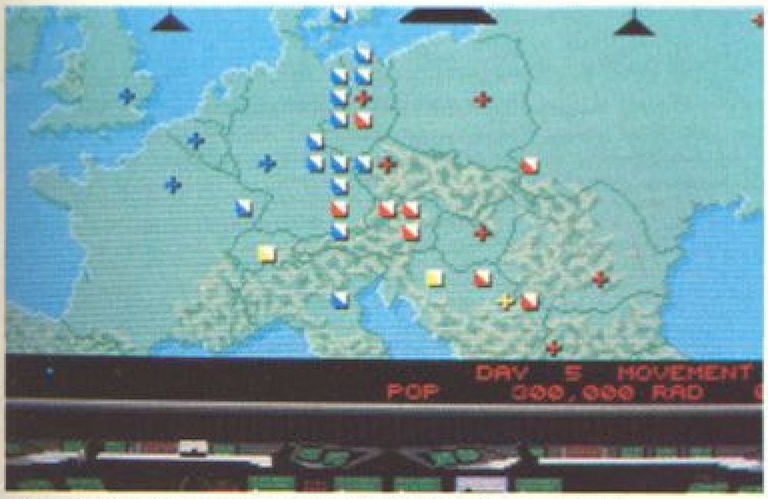


■ The locations of the various cities. ■ The position of the inventor's hut. ● The position of the Star league Cache.

The Starleague cache

the Mech parts store and then go down to the star map. Here you must highlight the following planets; Pesht, Benjamin, Skye, Ryerson, Kathil and Achener. Then go to the terminal near the entrance ladder and you will be given the white code. Go and switch on the Hyperpulse generator, and then go to the Hyperpulse itself. If everything has been done correctly you're there!

CONFLICT EUROPE



Nearly there for Nato, only a few more Pact units left.

If World War Three is going badly for you, try some of these tips, they could just make a difference.

NATO Strategy.

NATO's main role is to halt the Warsaw Pact advance before the red steamroller reaches France. Depending on the scenario and strength of units there are a number of ways of accomplishing this.

The first requires Nato to open a gap at the centre of the pact line. The quickest way of doing this is to set a dozen or so planeS on assault breaker, set your units to chemical weapons and launch a single nuclear strike early on at the strongest, most central unit. Before long a gap of two squares should have been opened. Send your three nearest, strongest units through the gap behind the northern pact armies. Keep these three units supplied as best as possible. The only major obstacle will be the 9th Shock Army who have an army strength of nine. Concentrate your assault breakers on this unit and try to whittle it down. Also set ten squadrons of planes to attack supply lines in order to prevent the Soviets from restocking. This should end with the Pact northern armies being eliminated leaving you to concentrate all efforts on the weaker southern army group.

Warsaw Pact Strategy

The Warsaw Pact role is easier. Try to drive three army groups through the centre, top and bottom of the NATO line as the objective is to conquer France and West Germany rather than get bogged down in combat. Don't waste time attacking neutral units either as it just wastes time. If you really do feel like massed combat, use one or two single nuclear stikes plus chemical weaponary, this should prove fun, if not lengthy.

Nuclear Tactics

While not the most devastating, single nuclear strikes are the safest. They stand a lesser chance of provoking heavy retaliation and more importantly limit civilian casaulties, helping to give you a good score. If towards the end of the thirty days it looks as though you are not going to complete your goal there is a fireplan that will eliminate eight enemy units – also a good move to use when you are on the verge of defeat as it can swing the course of the war. One side-effect it does carry is a potentially large reprisal from the enemy, so be warned!

And remember, the object is not to end civilisation, but to triumph with minimal civilian and military deaths.

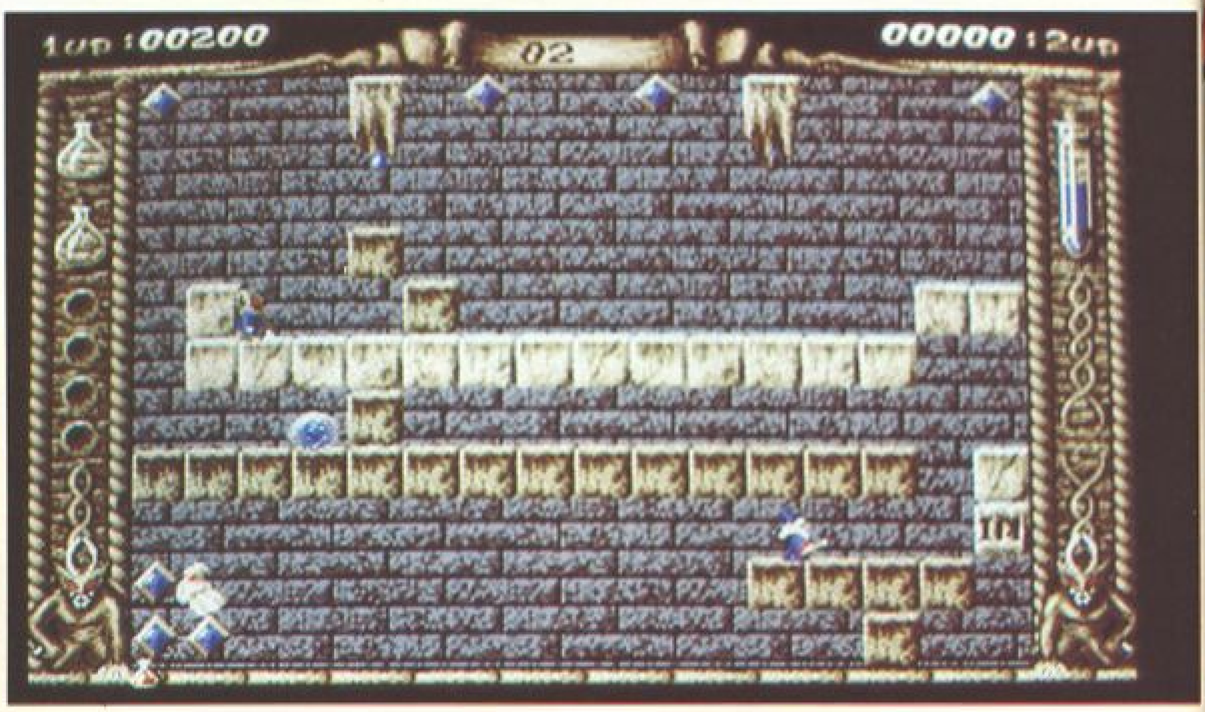
SPHERICAL

Not only do you get the Thunderbirds codes this month (see below), but the passwords for Spherical too!

One player mode
RADAGAST
YARMAK
ORCSLAYER
SKYFIRE
MIRGAL

Two player mode
GHANIMA
GLIEP
MOURNBLADE
JADAWIN
GUMBACHACHMAL

Paul Reilly, York



VOYAGER

To access the cheat mode on *Voyager* simply type 'WHEN THE SWEET SHOWERS OF APRIL FALL' on the main option screen, you will be granted a cheat option. Select this and you will be able to choose up to three different types of cheats, infinite shields, fuel and equipment.

Also, when the main cheat mode is active, by pressing 'Enter' on the main option screen you activate some extra functions:-

Shift, undo, help
Cycle through objects

Cursor keys
Rotate object

Then try pressing:

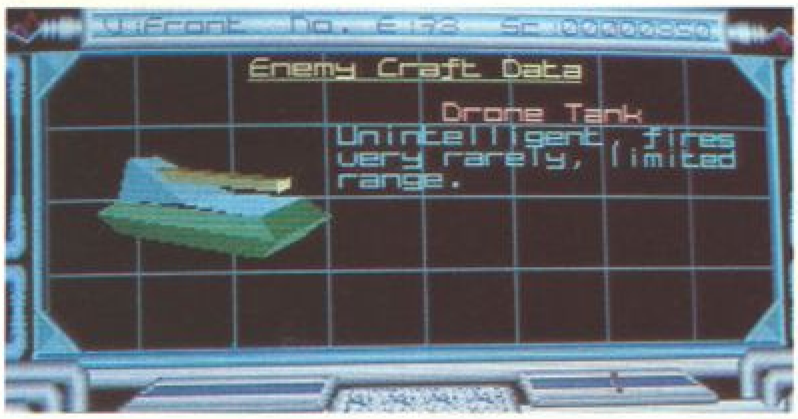
7 - to decrease size of object
4 - to enlarge size of object

Also when in game mode try these:-

F1 - Go down a level
F2 - Go up a level
F3 - Cycle through languages
F8 - Game position
F9 - Data on object
F10 - Frame rate

When you've checked out all those, try investigating object number 0058...

Thanks to Robi Barrington and Dan Meacham of Uttoxeter.


Enemy Craft Data

Drone Tank
Unintelligent, fires very rarely, limited range.

CHAPTER FOUR..
THUNDERBIRDS
COUNTDOWN TO DISASTER!

THUNDERBIRDS

Here they are! The exclusive codes for all the levels.
Level 1: No password required
Level 2: Recovery
Level 3: Aloysius
Level 4: Anderson

Thanks to Phil Palmer, Devon. Any more Thunderbird tipsters out there?

OPPORTUNITY POKES!

If you can map, crack, poke or solve games we need you! We're looking for a team of games masters who can contribute to the already high standard of information presented in ACE.

So if you enjoy meeting a challenge you could earn yourself recognition, the latest software and money!

Send examples of your work plus your name and address to:-

Let me write TNT
Ace
Priory Court
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London
EC1R 3AU

VIGILANTE

Madonna is being held hostage while her boyfriend is being kicked around the local streets, what can you do? Try typing GREEN CRYSTAL on the high score table. Pressing F1 during the game will give you an extra life and F8 will take you to the next level.

D Price, Wirral

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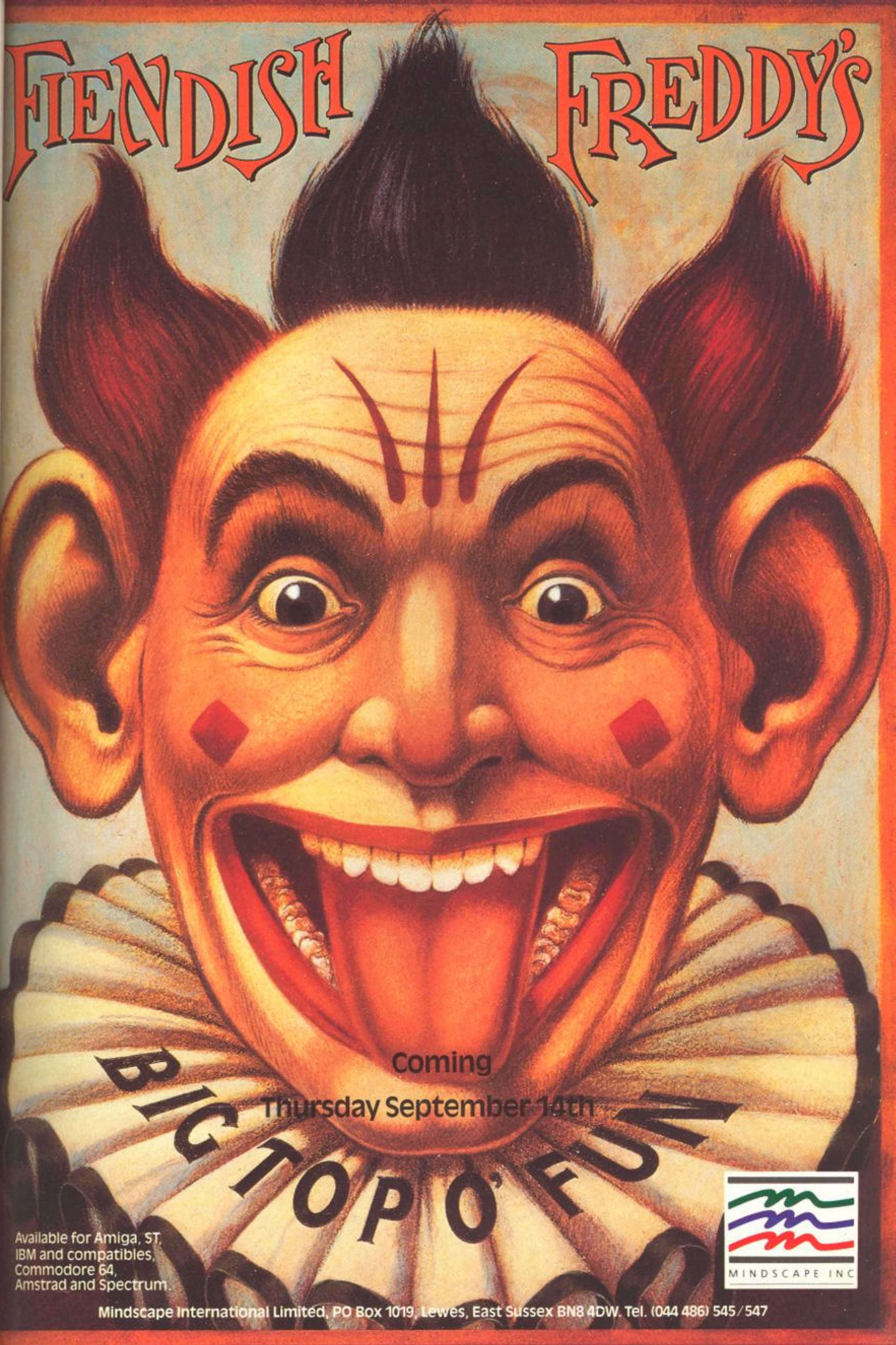

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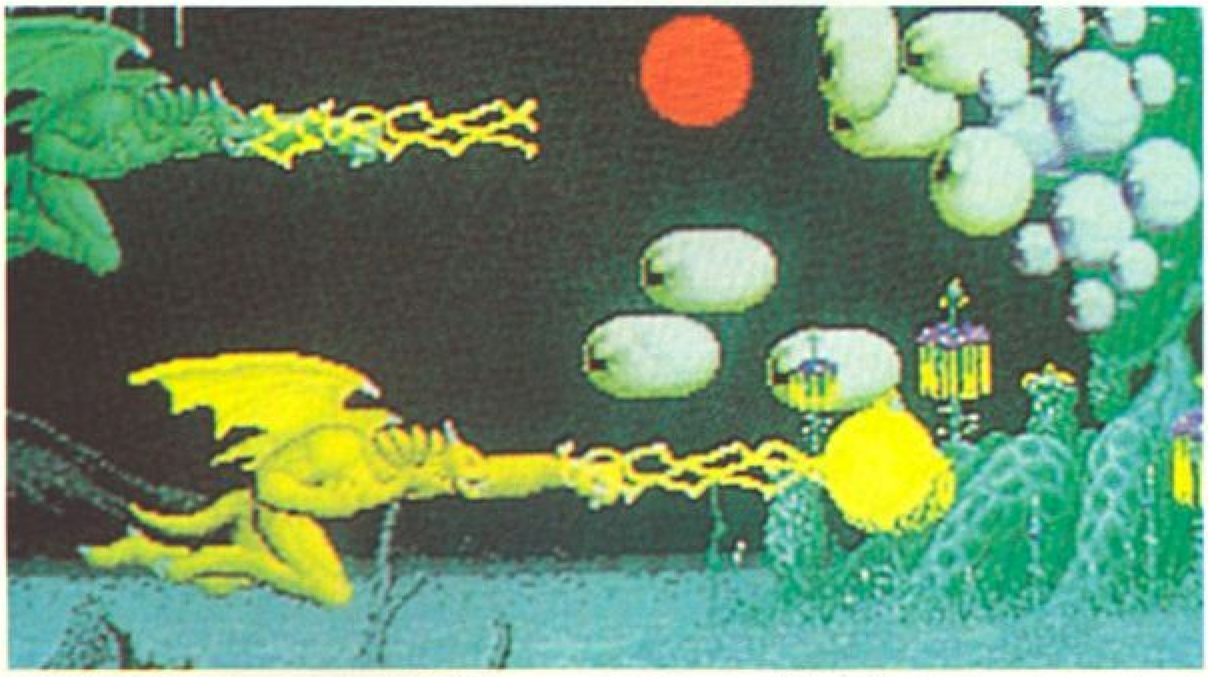
ALTERED BEAST



● To kill the first boss run up to him and keep shooting. When he is about to drop his head on you, run to the side. Keep repeating this to kill him.

● When you arrive at the second boss go right up to the eye and keep shooting. You'll get over run by other eyes, so press button 1 to get rid of them.

● The third boss is pretty simple. Keep shooting at him and duck when he fires back.

● Lastly, to kill the end-of-game nasty, stay in the corner of the screen and keep shooting. When he comes up to you, jump over him and shoot him in the back.

To continue the game when you die :-
Push up and left and both buttons. To repeat it press both buttons and right or left or up or down. If this doesn't work press both buttons and up-left, up-right, down-left, down-right.

Mark Sanders, Manchester

Or try this...to gain an extra life press top left and press the start button.

Daniel Elzein, London

ARCHIPELAGOS

PC Version

Solve Archipelago One. Press RETURN to select an Archipelago and type 8421 and press RETURN. Press RETURN again and you can select any Archipelago from 1 to 9999.

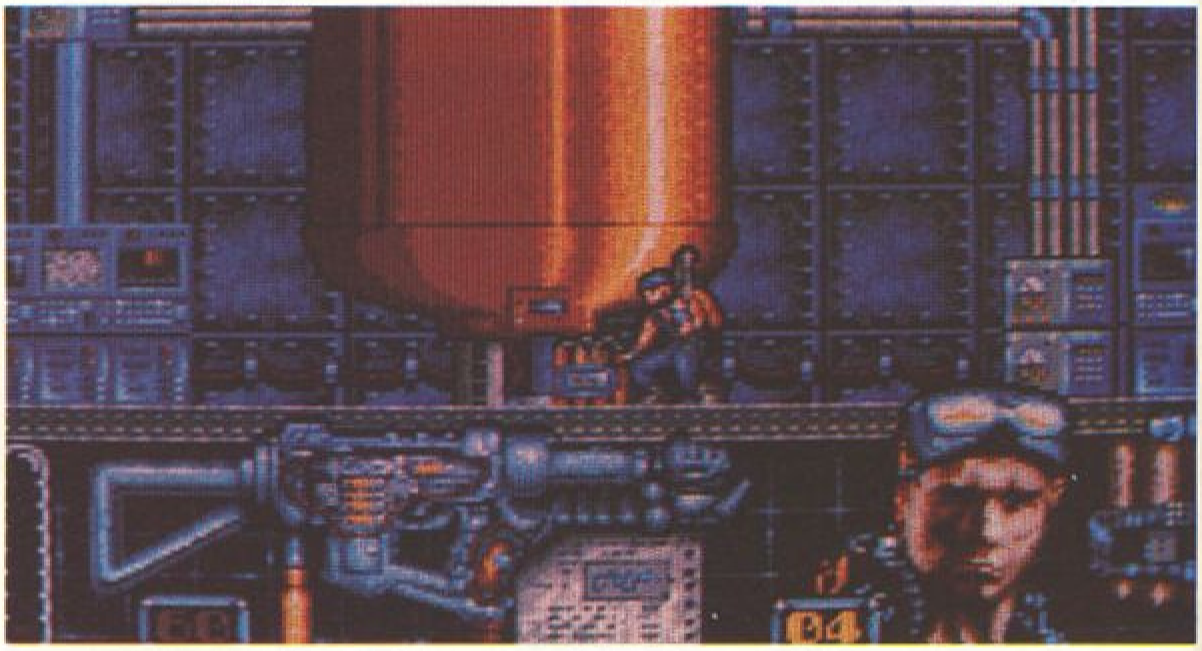
ST and Amiga Versions

Solve Archipelagoes One and Two. Ress RETURN to select an Archipelago and type 8421 and press RETURN. Press RETURN again and you can select any Archipelago between 1 and 9999.

Every fifth Archipelago in the first one hundred is the most interesting as these are pre-designed by the programmers. There are many very tricky and highly complex Archipelagoes to be seen. Try number 5942 as an example!

Thanks to Logotron themselves!

NAVY MOVES



The entry code for part two is 2277 and the solution is as follows:

From the start. R, D, R, Shoot 2nd Official and take his code, L, U enter door, R, shoot 1st official and take his code, l, enter door, U, R, R, R, D, D, R, U, enter door, D, enter "EMERGE" on the computer followed by the 1st Official's code, now type "STOP MOTOR" and enter 1st Official's code again, L, U, L, L, enter the door on the right, U, L, enter door, U R, R, R, R, D, enter door, R, enter door, R, enter door, R, D, D, L, L , L, shoot the Transmission Official and take his code, L, type on the computer "OPEN DOOR" then enter 2nd Officials code, L, set bomb on left side of the screen R, R, R, R, R, U, U, R, type on computer "Transmit" then enter transmissions Officials code, now enter "OABERBYAMD", L, L, U, U, U, go to the left side of screen.

Tommy Aitken, Scotland

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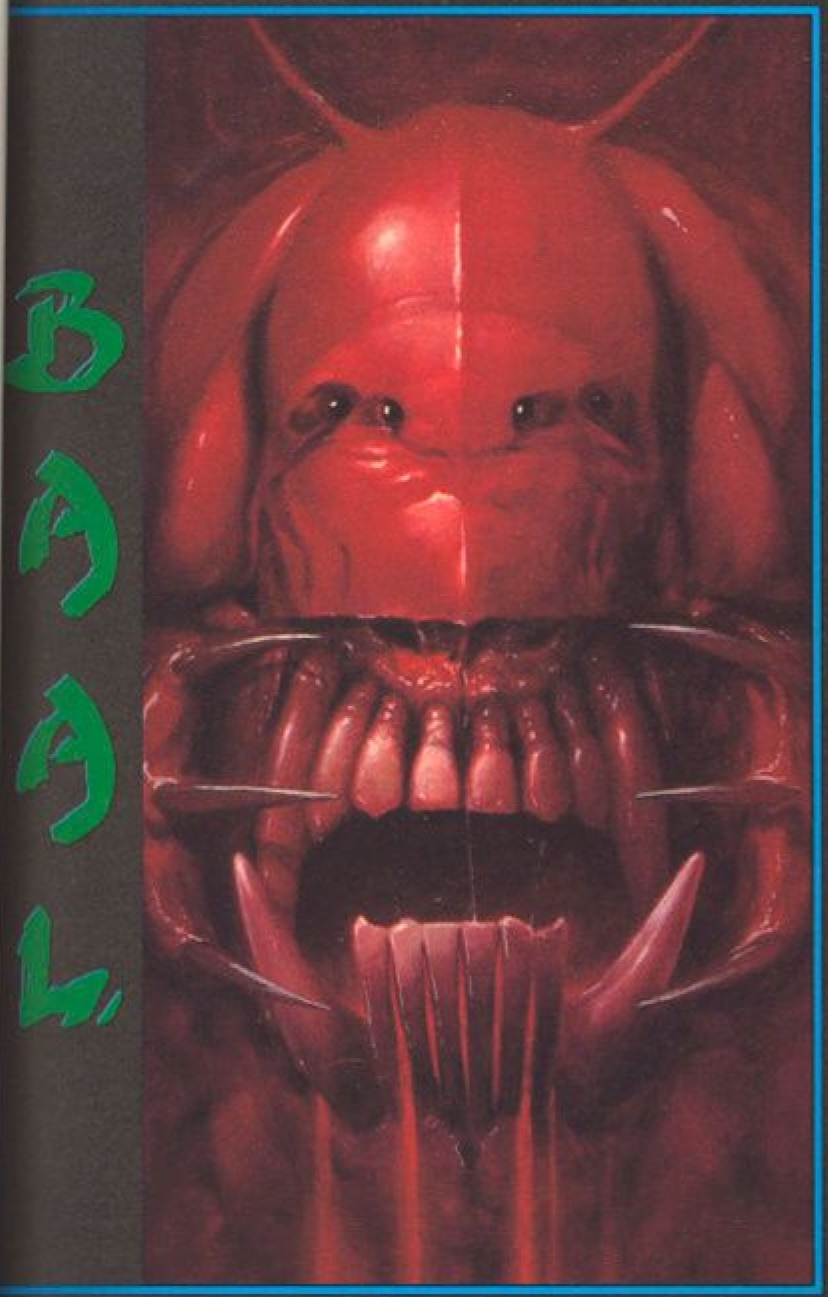

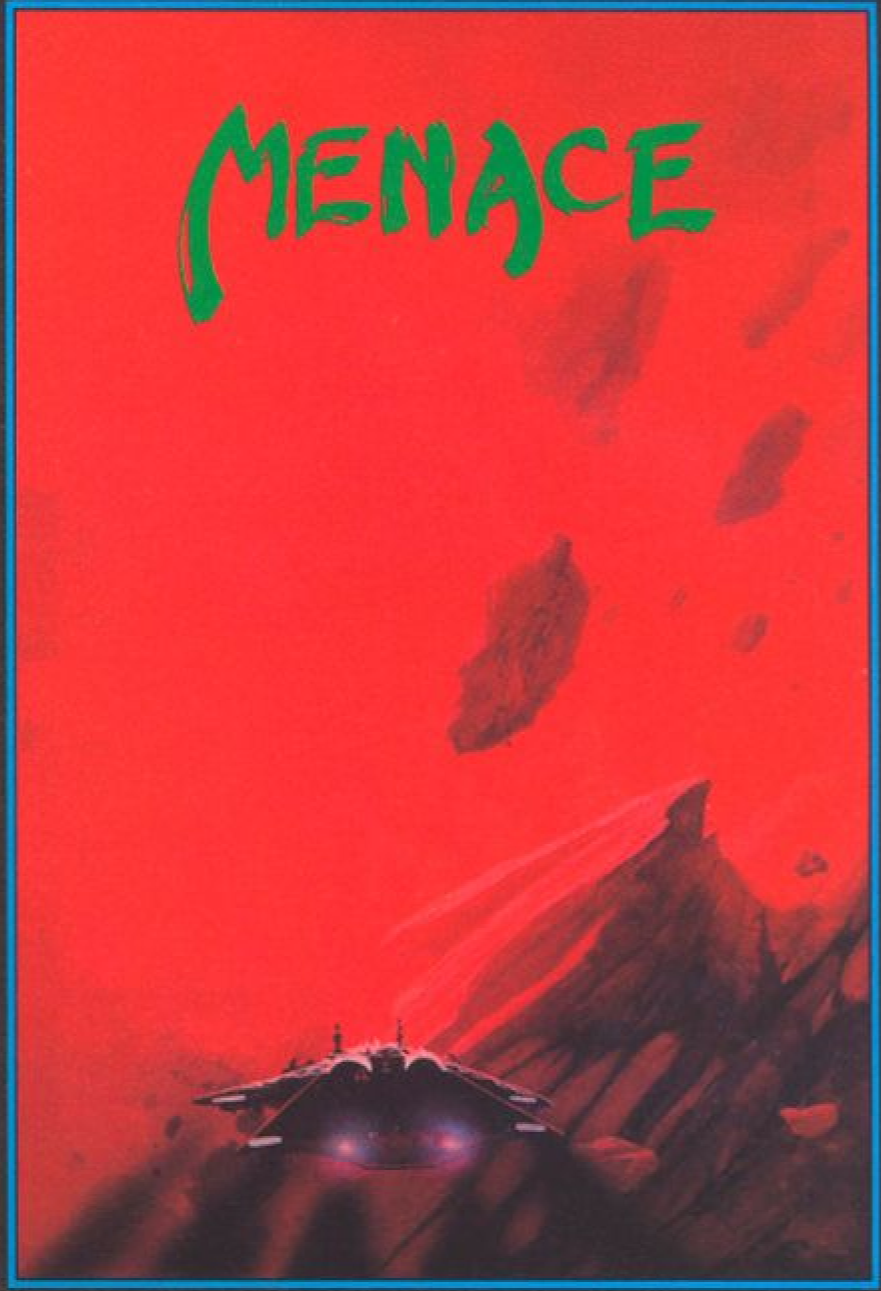

EGA Screen Shots

EGA Screen Shots

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UPDATES

CHECK OUT THE LATEST CONVERSIONS FOR YOUR MACHINE...

ST

ROCKET RANGER

Cinemaware, ST £24.99: Amiga version reviewed issue 15, Ace rating 814

Based around the cult movie series King of The Rocket Men, Rocket Ranger transports you back in time to the late nineteen thirties. Here we find the Nazi's building a giant rocket base from which they will dominate the world. Only one person can stop him.

It's been a long time since Rocket Ranger first appeared on the Amiga. As usual with Cinemaware software it featured very high quality graphics and sound accompanied with some superb plotting and execution. And we're glad to say the ST version is every bit as good, in fact almost identical. The only real gripe about the conversion is that it comes on three disks, with a tremendous amount of disk swapping.

Even with the disk swapping Rocket Ranger is an absorbing, taxing game which should appeal to most people who like challenging interactive adventure movies.

ACE RATING 805

AMIGA

JACK NICHOLAS' GREATEST 18 HOLES OF MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF

Accolade, Amiga £24.95dk: PC version reviewed issue 23, Ace Rating 870

Until now the only way of getting a really good outing on the green in bad weather was via Leaderboard. At last the domination of that market was broken by the PC and C64 version of this game. In typical Accolade style it features digitised pictures, speech and glossy intro screens, which help present an equally glossy game.

All the major features you'd expect are here, slices and hooks, water, mud, rough, bunkers in fact everything but the crowd. The only complaint is the length of time taken to draw up the screen, roughly three seconds, though it seems longer.

The ideal game for the golf enthusiast, plays well, looks good, preforms well. Thumbs up to Accolade.

Ace Rating 890

ROBOCOP

Ocean, Amiga £19.95dk: Spectrum version reviewed issue 16, Ace rating 807

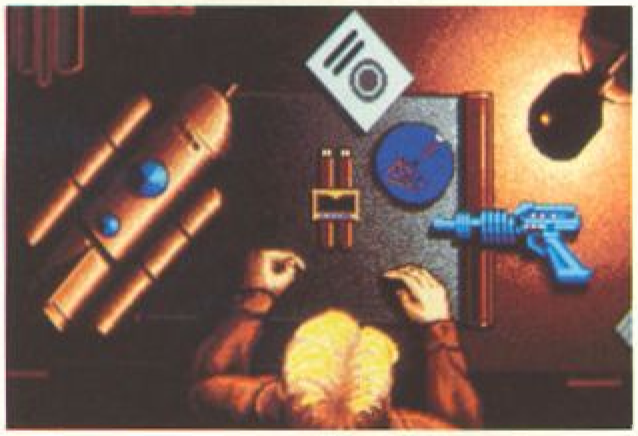
Shortly after the appearance of the ST version Ocean promised that Amiga Robocop would feature full screen graphics as opposed to the ridiculous metallic border, plus lots of extra effects. Sadly the penny didn't drop that way and what we were left with was an almost identical port from the ST.

Looking on the bright side though, it is a pretty good game. Not an actual arcade conversion but the licence of the film, Ocean had the ability to make the odd tweaks and changes to the layout. These include several between level sequence such as a shooting range and matching photo-fit pictures.

Unfortunate to see a port over from the ST, but still a pretty good, playable game.

ACE RATING 810

***Rocket Ranger* on the ST**



C64

NEW ZEALAND STORY

Ocean, C64 £9.95cs: Amiga version reviewed issue 24 Ace Rating 875

The hi-res graphics are very neat and tidy, though the amount of browns and yellows used on the colour scheme leave a little bit to be desired. The sound track is as cutesy as ever and complement the game perfectly. Most importantly though it is immensely playable, even if it does drop a few points to the 16 bit predecessor

ACE RATING 875

SPECTRUM

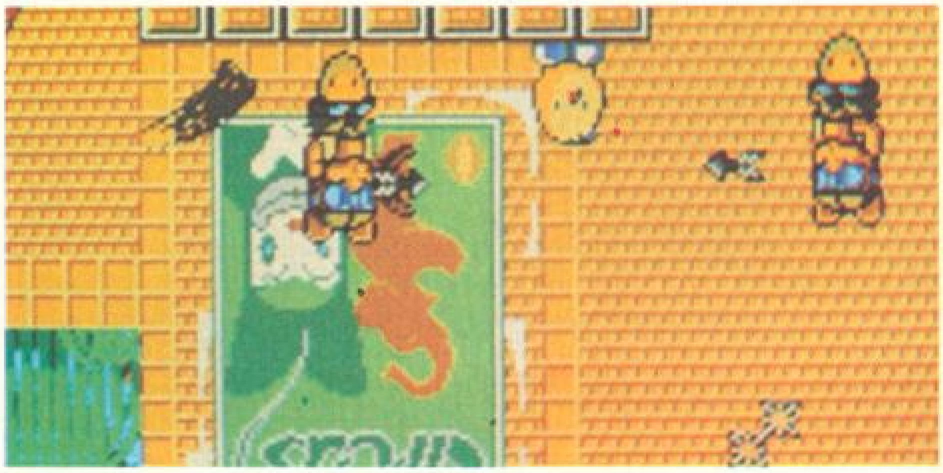
NEW ZEALAND STORY

Ocean, Spectrum £8.95cs: Amiga version reviewed issue 24 Ace Rating 875

Although pipped at the post by Rainbow Islands on the 16-bit versions, the eight-bit conversions of New Zealand Story have been surprisingly good (check out the C64 version elsewhere on this page). The Spectrum conversion is particularly impressive. As usual the Spectrum version is monochromatic with black on yellow as the colour choice. Despite this it still plays very well and holds its own in comparison. A game worthy of a place in the collection.

ACE RATING 860

New Zealand Story



CTW Survey '89 CTW Survey

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3. Games Machine
4. Crash
5. Zzap
6. C+VG
7. Commodore User
8. Gamesweek (Combined with Pop mid-Feb)
   Sinclair User
10. Your Sinclair.

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POWER DRIFT
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GREAT AMIGA CONVERSION

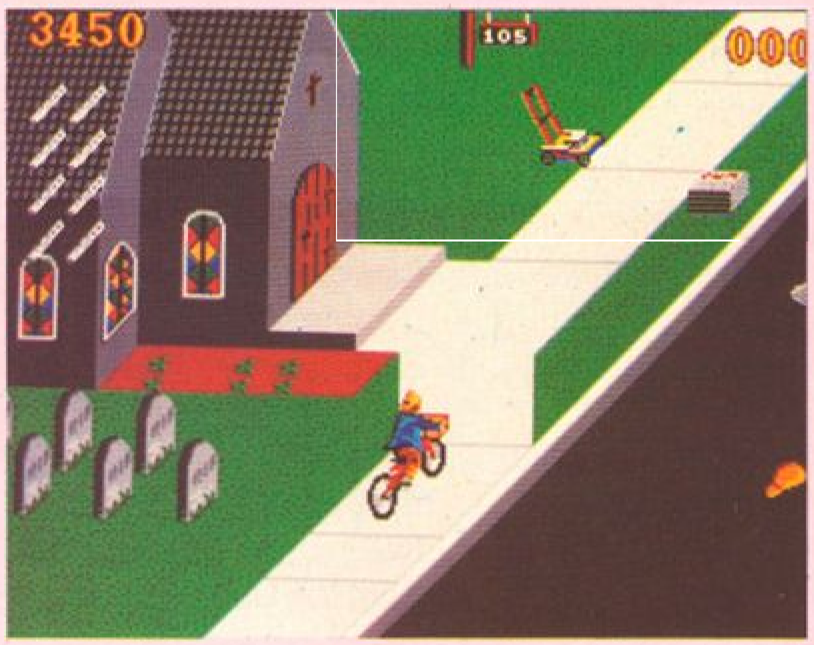
PAPERBOY

Elite Amiga £19.99

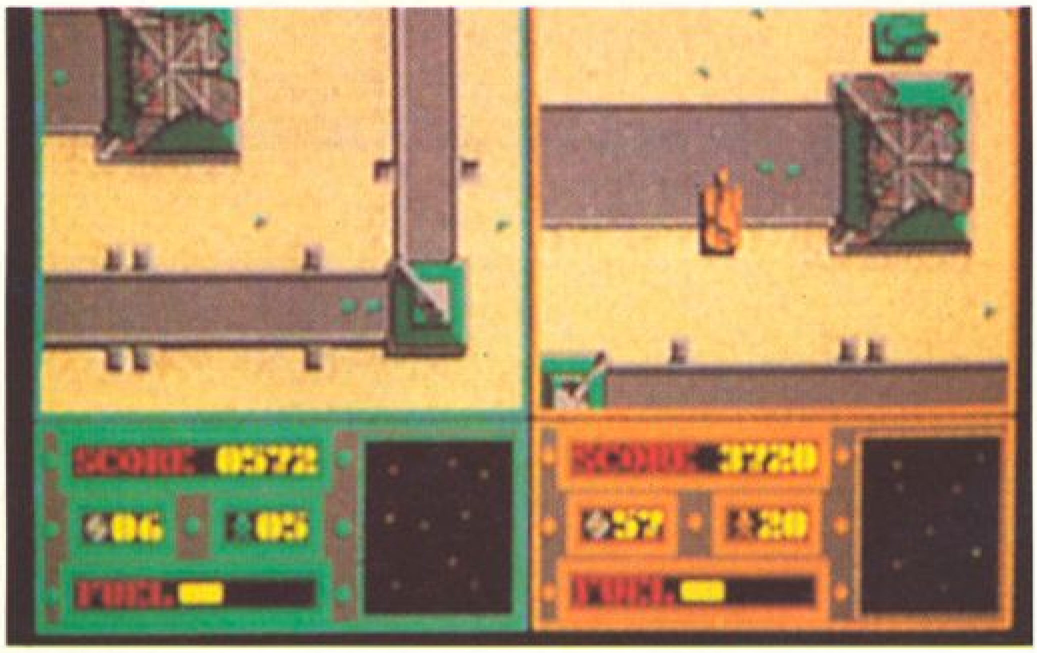
Everybody's favourite coin-op comes to the Amiga at last and has never felt as at home. Take the word Arcade, and put alongside it the word Perfect (I used to be a big fan of Sesame Street) and there you have a phrase to describve Elite's conversion. To describe simply how the game works, you are a paperboy and you have to deliver papers the American way, by throwing them at buildings very hard. So hard, you can topple giants, break windows, and level gravestones. Only a certain number of the houses on your run are subscribers, and you'd better be sure to deliver all of them. Any subscriber you miss out, instantly stops subscribing. Run out of subscribers and it's game over.

The graphics have been copied perfectly, as has the sound, right down to the voices used. Fans of the original should most definitely get hold of this version, and people who have never heard of it should join the queue, otherwise you'll really be missing something.

ACE RATING 878



FUN ON THE C64



FIREPOWER

Microillusions, C64, £9.99 cs, £14.99 dk

Firepower may not have been a resounding success for Microillusions upon its release as an Amiga title a while back, but as a two player game it has few equals. Now being re-released by The Software Company Ltd, the C64 version has finally seen the light of day, and what a fitting conversion it is too.

This is how it works. Two players, either human or computer, fight a private war between themselves. Each has a large base, full of guns, walls and buildings. Some of the buildings contain extra ammunition, some contain medical supplies and one of them contains the flag. By now you've probably already guessed the idea. Get into the opponent's base, steal the flag and get home again.

Played as a split screen multi scrolling plan view shoot-'em-up, the playing area is huge, so just finding your opponent or his flag is a problem. To add to the problem, enemy guns fire constantly at you, as do the enemy helicopters that buzz overhead. Every shot detracts from your energy, and when your energy is spent, you lose a tank and start again back at your base.

The graphics are slightly blocky, as can only be expected with a 64 game, but well coloured, and the feel of the Amiga version has been carried very well indeed. Sound is limited to a constant rumnbling of the tanks and boom noises, which does the job well enough.

The most important thing that could have been carried across, and one that has (thankfully), is the fun level. Even as an 8 bit game, Firepower is still extraordinarily fun to play. One definitely to look out for.

ACE RATING: 841

TRIVIAL AMIGA CONVERSION

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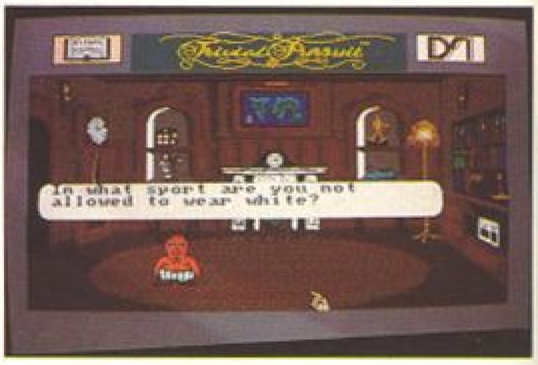
The world's most boring board game comes to the Amiga, and now you can have hours of endless fun naming major river tributaries and correctly identifying the shape of Ghandi's birthmark.

The idea is simple. Move around the hexagonal board, answering trivia questions as you go along. Land on one of the corners of the board, and you get to answer a special question that, if answered correctly, will result in you receiving a 'wedge' to fit in your piece. Display an amazing intellectual feat and obtain all six wedges, and it's a race to the centre of the board where you answer one final trivia question, chosen by everybody else from the six categories available, and then the game is yours.

The one real problem with TP is that it's just too easy to cheat. The computer asks you a question and then asks you whether you got it right or not. No form of input is required. There is the option to play solo, but as the only real challenge involved is trying to remain honest, it ain't fun.

Graphically it hardly pushes the Amiga to it's limits, and the sound wouldn't sound out of place on a 64. A pretty dull game, if you ask me, but if you like this sort of thing, you might as well buy the boardgame. After all an Amiga might look out of place at a yuppie dinner party.

ACE RATING: 695



In what sport are you not allowed to wear white?

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5 GAME

machine STAR PLAYER

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- * THE ACE - A great football game that will have you queuing up for a season ticket.
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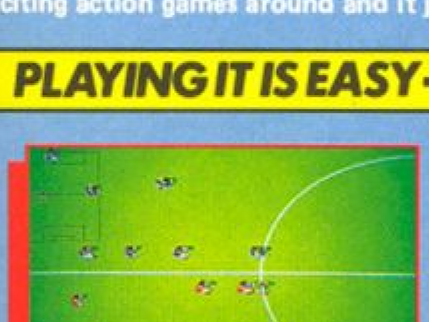
PLAYING IT IS EASY - MASTERING IT WILL TAKE TIME - A LOT OF TIME



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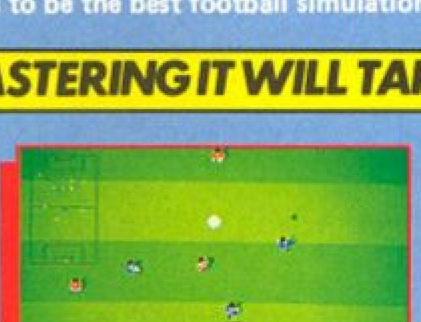

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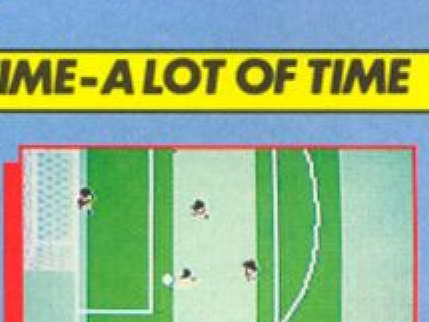

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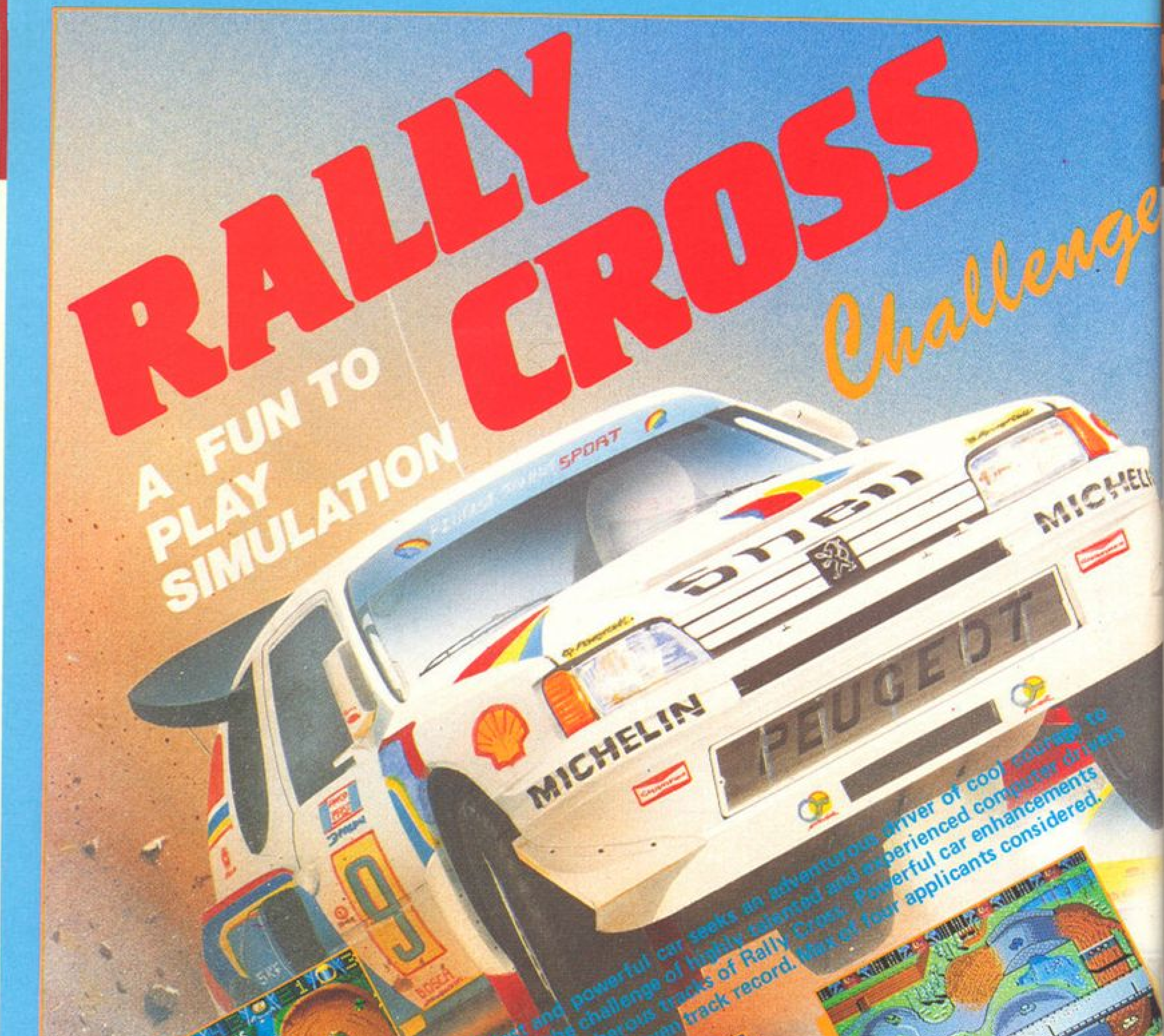
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ARCADEOLOGY

ULIAN RIGNALL GOES BACK IN TIME

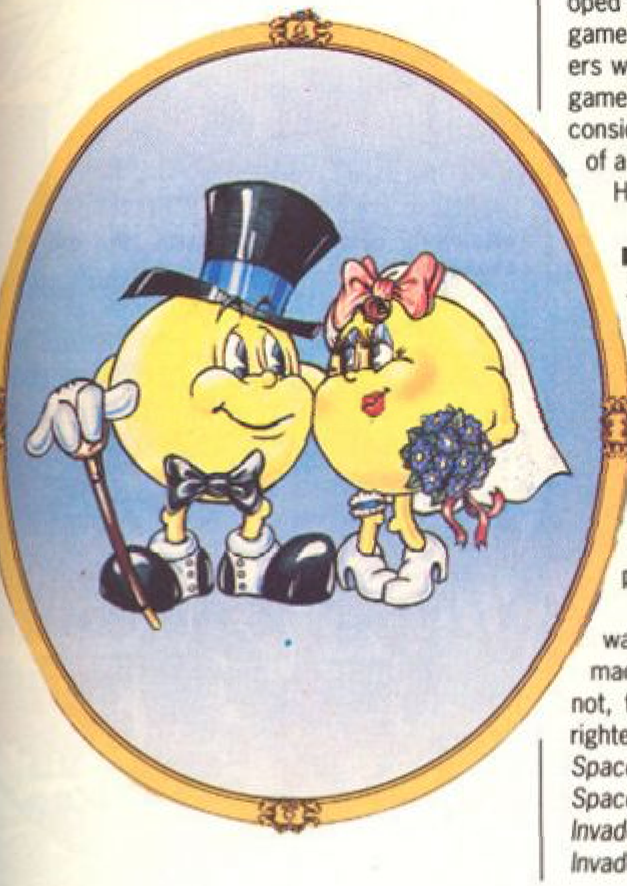
Ever wondered why so many people think computer games are 'evil', or what the bug was on Breakout, or how Donkey Kong got its name? Find out as Julian Rignall continues his history of the arcade phenomenon...

Within months of the first video games going into full production, the Japanese reported a coin shortage, and many extra millions had to be minted to cope with the growing demand. In Britain, arcade attendances quadrupled, and profits increased tenfold. *Space Invader*-related crimes were even reported; it was blamed for truancy, and with the help of typical media sensationalism, *Space Invaders* gained a certain notoriety, a stigma which, sadly, video games still bear today. The Invaders had landed...

The first arcade video game appeared during 1970. It was called *Pong*, and was a sort of two-player video tennis. Each contestant controlled a bat, with the idea to get the video ball past your opponent. The contest was judged over fifteen rounds. Banal stuff, really, but from little acorns...

An interesting point is that two years later, Nolan Bushnell, designer of the original *Pong* game, produced another video game called *Computer Space*. This was a one-on-one battle between a ship and a flying saucer, and its stylish black cabinet featured thrust and rotate controls! Unfortunately this little beastie arrived on the scene about six years too early – only 2000 machines were sold.

PacMan – surely the most famous video character of all time?



In the years up to 1978, coin-ops began to get increasingly more complicated. *Breakout* games created a mini craze, and developed with advancing walls, multi-balls and shrinking bats. The top *Breakout* game, Atari's *Super Breakout*, gave the player four different *Breakout* scenarios in one box. Incidentally, the first *Breakout* machines were bugged – if the ball first appeared on the right, there was a 25% chance that you wouldn't be able to get a particular brick on the fourth screen and you'd have to trash your game!

One-on-one tank and air combat games were also popular, where players fought one another with identical tanks, bi-planes and jets... Driving games appeared, but were very simplistic, incorporating an overhead view and scrolling roads, of which *Smokey Joe*, a Fire Engine game, and *Super Bug* were prime examples. Atari broke the mould with *Night Driver*, a 3D game in which the player raced down a road whose kerb was comprised of white dots.

Sega also entered the video game market with two through-the-cockpit shoot 'em ups, but again technology limitations resulted in them being very simple. Graphics on all the early machines were black and white, and screen resolutions were very low, with lego-like sprites.

Bally finally introduced the first colour video game into the arcades early in 1978 with their revolutionary, but very expensive *Star Fire*. It was a 3D game and came in a large sit-in cabinet, but was still fairly simplistic, with the player attempting to shoot down craft suspiciously like the ones in *Star Wars* and *Battlestar Galactica*!

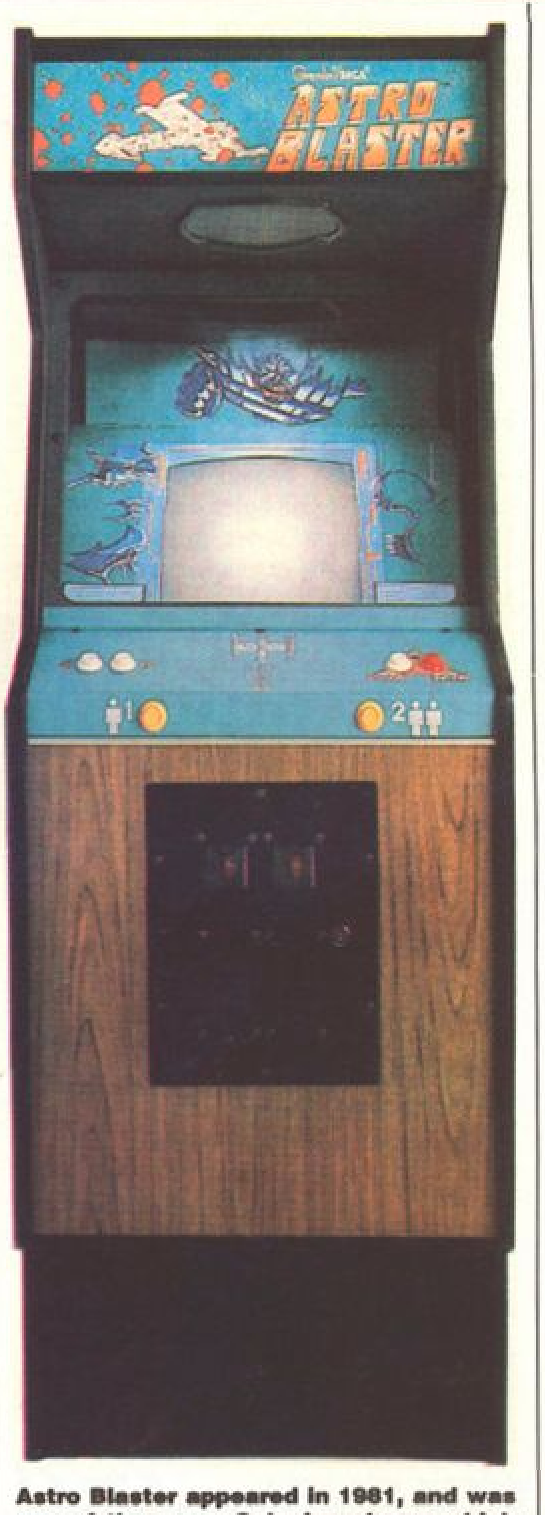
But finally, in mid-1978, Japanese psychologists came up with an idea that was to create the video game boom – *Space Invaders*. But even they didn't get it quite right. Being developed simultaneously with *Space Invaders* was a game called *Blue Shark*, which the manufacturers were confidently backing as THE hot video game of the year. *Space Invaders* was merely considered a novelty which might become a bit of a cult machine.

How wrong they were...

INVADER INVASION

At the main Japanese trade show in the Summer of 78, early indication of the *Space Invaders* potential success came when hundreds of orders were taken on the spot. *Blue Shark* was soon forgotten as the *Space Invaders* boom really got underway. Within months you could buy *Space Invader* records, books, pencil cases, t-shirts, underwear... It was truly a phenomenon.

As the potential of *Space Invaders* was realised, copies and derivatives of the machine came onto the market. Believe it or not, the original *Space Invaders* wasn't copyrighted, and different manufacturers created *Space Invaders Deluxe*, *Super Invaders*, *Space Invaders II*, *Fast Invaders*, *Space Invaders* tabletop machines, colour *Space Invaders*... And so it continued, with the fidget-



Astro Blaster appeared in 1981, and was one of the many Galaxian clones which appeared that year.

DONKEY KONG??

If you think *Donkey Kong* sounds a rather strange name, you'd be quite right. It should have been called ***Monkey** Kong*, but a faulty telex between Japan and America resulted in the machine cabinets being manufactured with the "Donkey" moniker all over it!

Manufacturers Nintendo swiftly changed the code, and the game forever became *Donkey Kong*.

If that's bad, what about *Continental Circus*..not a bad name, but for a racing game?? It should, of course, have been *Continental Circuits*.

N ROAD,
or VISA.
2 93422.

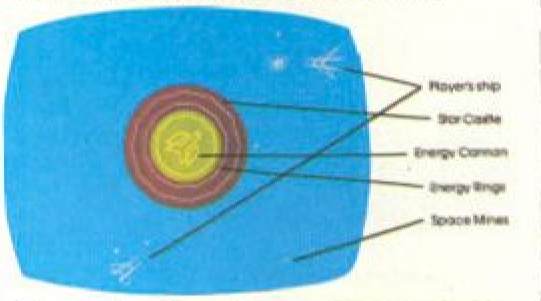
ty little sprites ruling the roost for a year before other, better machines appeared in the arcades and the *Invaders* bubble finally burst.

The class of 1980 was a mixed bunch, with *Invaders* clones and derivatives still appearing in various forms. But the more interesting games included Atari's *Missile Command, Centipede* and *Asteroids*, William's highly advanced *Defender*, *Galaxians* (which would be cloned and used as the basis for a myriad of other machines over the following year and a half), *Frogger, Battlezone, Scramble* and *Donkey Kong*.

And of course there was *PacMan*, a machine that was responsible for the second arcade boom. The highly addictive and non-violent gameplay drew arcade punters from all quarters. Female arcade attendance increased tenfold, parents came to play... and those out to make a quick buck on the latest craze increased *PacMan* awareness with *PacMan* merchandising beyond belief – sweets, T-shirts, comics, a cartoon series, breakfast cereal, cuddly toys, towels, clocks, watches – the list was endless.

But sadly, *PacMan* was to be the last major arcade phenomenon. As coin-op manufacturers continued to release *Invader/PacMan* clones, arcadesters became bored and arcade attendances began to dwindle back to a more normal level. This, of course, spelled disaster for many companies, and during 1983 the arcade industry in America went through a very lean time, with many companies winding up business.

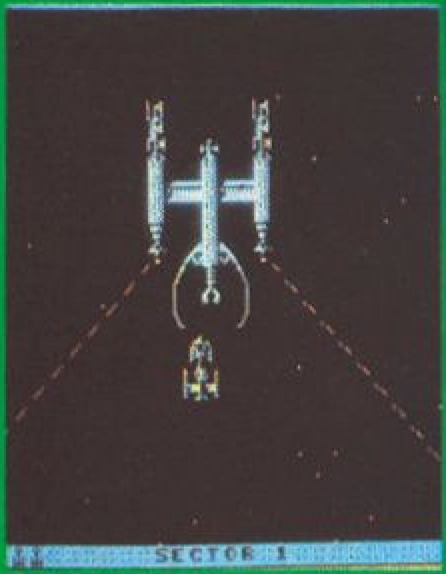
Even the advent of laser disk arcade machines couldn't bring back the punters who were lost from the *PacMan* games... and so the market finally settled down to meet the demand. These days the arcade industry is very healthy, but one wonders what surprises arcade manufacturers have in store for us over the next few years... and can they ever engineer a third massive video game boom?



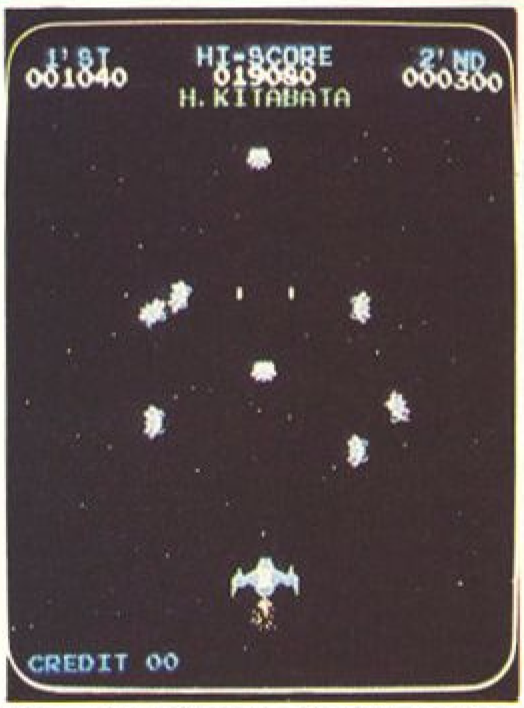
The instruction diagram for Star Castle – sublimely simple; the manufacturers were confident that their 'Patented Vectorbeam Monitors' would draw the punters.

TIME, GENTLEMEN, PLEASE...

An interesting point to note about early video coin-ops was their game time limitations. Games that used a system of lives were rare. Instead, other game mechanics were employed to make sure that games were short and coins kept on rolling in. For example, many combat games (*Red Baron*, *Nite Flite*, *Tank*) were contests played over a fixed limit of fifteen rounds, thus limiting game time to a certain extent (unless of course you got two wags attempting to cause annoyance but not shooting each other). Other games were played over a time limit, with the player having to score a set target to increase his time. As the game progressed, the targets would become increasingly difficult to achieve, and consequently even good players couldn't last for more than a few minutes. Lives certainly seemed like a good concept when first employed – games could last for a few seconds. But top players who could actually master games could play for hours on a single credit – in fact the record is over 87 hours! Nowadays arcade games always have a definite end, so that play time is limited – even to experts.



Sega's Space Trek was a typical example of a game limited by challenge rather than time. 'UFO attack becomes fiercer with each new round', boasted the publicity. With strange disregard for profit, the game even gave you a second chance after you'd lost all your ships.



Yet another Galaxians clone, Moon Cresta was one of the first games to feature progressive gameplay, enabling to increase your firepower by docking with other portions of your ship.

MOON CRESTA
MOON CRESTA

Midway's original Galaxians, the game that spawned a hundred others.

FEMALE ARCADESTERS

When the video game boom occurred, it was noted that players of the machines were predominantly male. In fact hardly any females actually played the machines at all! Why this was the case was a mystery that machine manufacturers tried to answer but couldn't... until Midway accidentally stumbled upon some sort of solution in 1980 when PacMan began to munch his way into the arcades. All of a sudden female arcade attendance increased tenfold – PacMan was a game that appealed to both sexes! Its combination of skill and non-violence seemed to be the answer, but unfortunately neither Midway or any other coin-op manufacturers could follow up PacMan, and as a result female attendance in the arcades slumped again, and has remained far lower than male attendance ever since!

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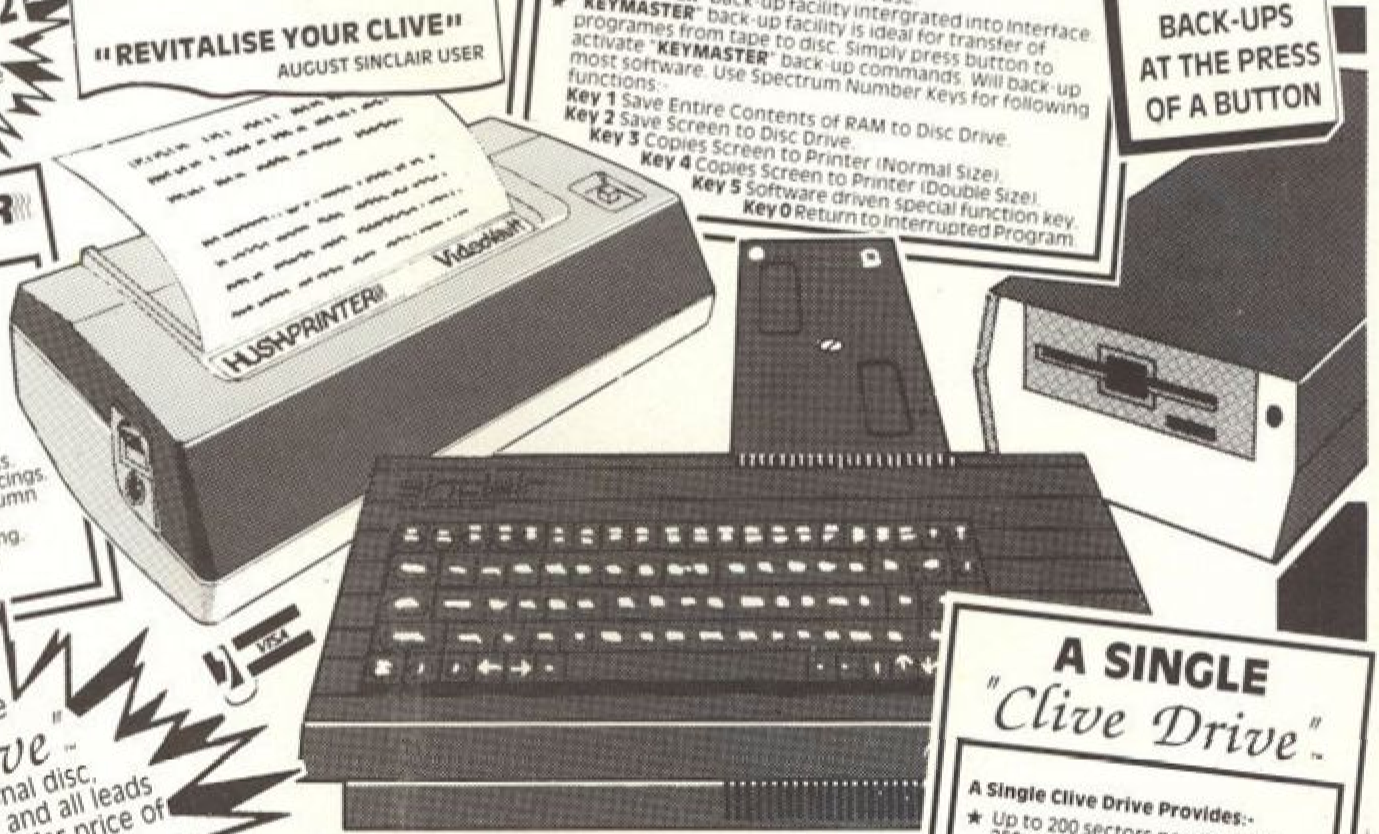

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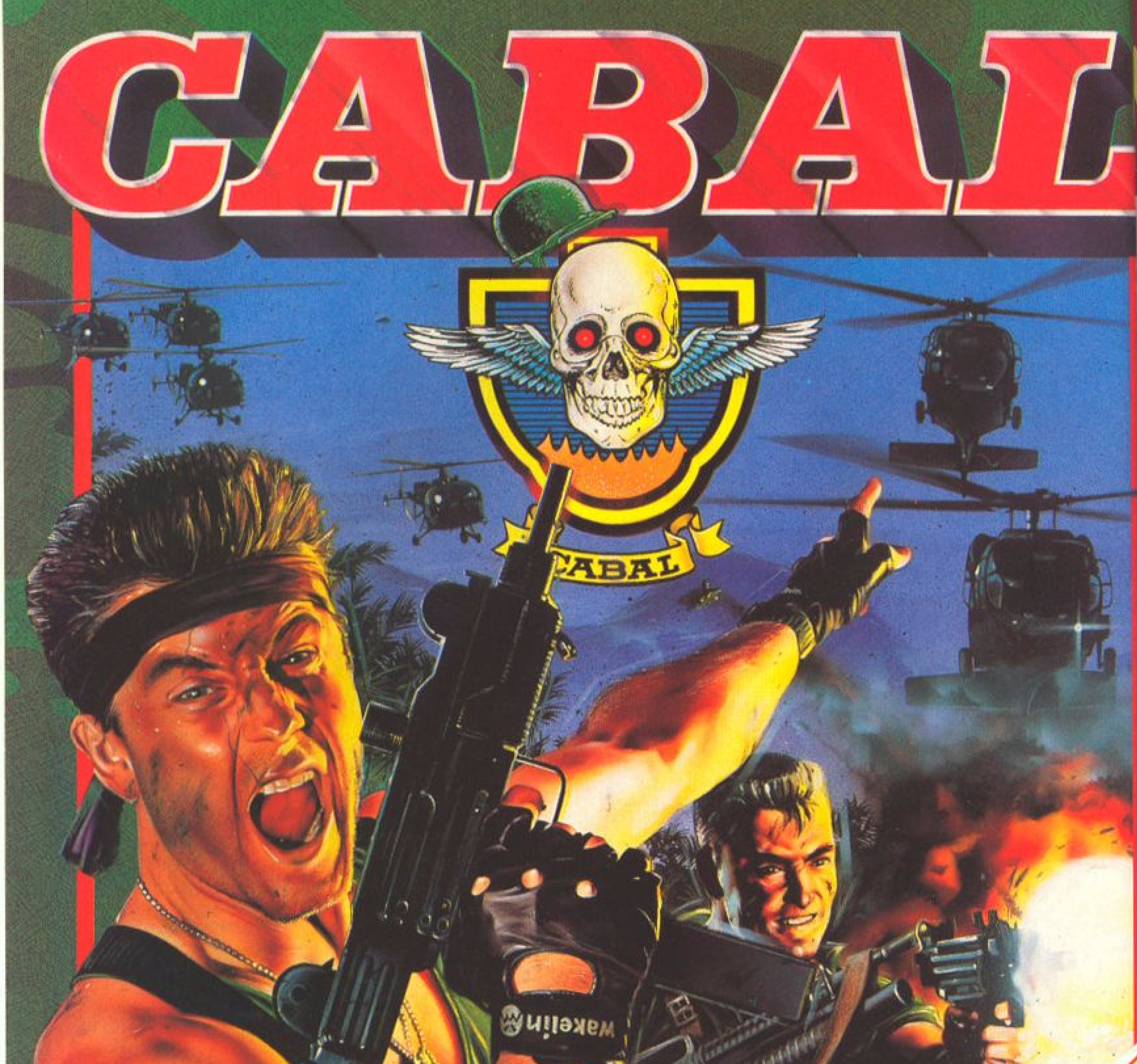
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MAKING IT...

AND NOT JUST MUSIC EITHER. CAN MIDI EARN YOU ££££?

We all know about MIDI, but many of us tend to overlook it because we assume that it requires either musical or detailed technical knowledge. You go out and buy your MIDI keyboard, your MIDI interface (or your ST with one built-in), your MIDI software and then...and then what??

ACE has given several practical answers to this thorny question in previous issues, ranging from a guide to the MIDI standard itself (in the first four issues) to a detailed look at cheap keyboards and sound modules. This month, however, we're going to look at something completely different: the use of MIDI by people who want to make a living from it, not for games or software but for adverts, videos, plays, records and playing live.

We chose people at various stages of their respective careers from the pro muso with years of experience to the ones just starting out. By looking at their stories it provides you with the one thing you don't get with the software - first hand experience. The interesting thing is that not all of them are musically OR computer literate - in fact all of them would admit to a slight phobia about computers in the initial stages. All of them have one thing in common though - a striving to achieve what they have set to do.

EDDIE GRAHAM

At the age of 16, Eddie Graham finished school, bought himself a synthesizer and decided to figure out all about MIDI. Having learnt about one instrument he bought another and repeated the process. In the meantime he found a studio not far from where he lived that was already using a Commodore 64 plus C-Lab 16 track software to produce tracks for anybody and anything.

This was in the front room of one John Purser, who had been adding bit by bit to his collection of keyboards and equipment, paying for it by playing any sort of gigs that came to hand. Dipping into some savings and borrowing money from relatives Eddie bought what was then a superior synth, albeit second-hand - a Yamaha DX5. By pooling resources with John he was able to gain not only valuable experience of putting tracks together for singers and artists but also first-hand knowledge of how computer sequencers worked with MIDI.

Two years ago the studio bought an ST 1040 and Steinberg Pro 24 sequencer having decided that the Commodore was too limited in speed and memory. As the money started to come in from sequencing backing tracks so the money went out in new equipment - the most expensive being an Akai 5900 sampler costing a shade under £2000. Because of the space limitations imposed by the size of the room the only way for it to work is to be purely a MIDI based studio. The only 'live' recording area is about the size of the average fridge.

The big advantage that a low-cost MIDI based studio has is that your overheads are low. Provided you are able to provide a reasonable standard you can come in with some

THE ACE TEN POINT GUIDE TO MAKING A LIVING FROM MIDI STUDIO WORK...

1 The first thing you will need is something that only you can provide - the determination. You have to be prepared to work quite long hours, often for very little reward.

2 Start small – with a computer, like say an ST or Amiga, and maybe a tone module that can cope with drums. One good buy I spotted recently was the Casio CZ230S (see ACE issue 24) which provides four channels of sound plus one of drums. This unit has actually been superceded by the most recent Casio keyboards and is therefore an excellent discounted or second-hand buy. The most basic software is actually available on Public Domain.

3 You will need a recorder, preferably a 4-track plus a cassette deck to mix onto, plus a decent set of speakers and an amplifier.

4 If you are confident enough in your skills, be pushy! Make it known that you are willing to put music and/or sound effects to anything and everything. The local youth club, drama group, camera club - in short, anything!

5 If you know a studio, see if you can hang around there - get friendly but don't get in the way.

6 Check out the nearby colleges: some might run daytime or evening courses.

7 Maintain a portfolio of all your worthwhile recordings that you can play to prospective clients. It needn't necessarily be of your own material, but that rather depends on whether you see yourself as a composer, arranger, performer or technician. If sending material, make sure the presentation is perfect.

8 If you think you have a reasonable and contrasting short tape, try looking in your local yellow pages for video production companies. If possible go and see them and see what they want in the way of music. With the upsurge of more radio stations on the horizon there is going to be more work in this area: ads, jingles etc.

9 Keep in with your local music shops - take out card adverts at first and build your contacts up.

10 Keep your equipment clean and in good shape, otherwise your first session could end in a pile of hiss and crackle followed by a blank screen!

very competitive rates. When even things like plugs, leads and sockets can mean a painful hole in your pocket you very quickly learn how to solder and build the odd bit or two to keep the costs down.

One area of work they've developed is providing half-finished recordings! By acting as a pre-production studio, John and Eddie can come up with a complete backing track on a 16 track machine which can then be taken to a full-blown studio for acoustic instruments and vocals to be added. Mixdown can take place either there or in a smaller studio but the basic tracks have been provided at a fraction of the cost of doing the whole thing in the full studio. The 16 track can also be 'striped' with a synchronization code to give the artists room to add further sequenced tracks or to work with video if necessary. To add this SMPTE code the studio is fitted out with a Jim Cooper sync box which liaises between the speed of the tape and the speed of the computer sequencer.

Rifling his savings, Eddie added to the DX5 with a drum machine and then an ST 1040 running Steinberg's Pro 24. He then took the financial plunge and, donning kneepads, borrowed money from the bank having convinced them that there was work there. He bought an EPS sampler and a Roland U110 multi-timbral sample player. This meant that he could work at home as well as helping out in the studio and try to get work for himself. Songs are started in his own home - the disk taken into the studio when it is free and then orchestrated in full and recorded onto the 16 track. Eddie is also getting work programming in other studios. At the time of writing he was working on a British Gas advert.

At present he is just about breaking even but both Eddie and his bank manager would appreciate a little more work. He is on 021-459-1727.

DAVE AND ROSE

In good old entertainment agency terms, Dave and Rose are 'A Boy/Girl Duo' and work the clubs most weekends, averaging about three gigs a week, Dave on guitar, Rose on vocals and the rest from a D110 tone module. Their personal preferences are for music a-la-Blues Brothers and plenty of authentic Rhythm and Blues.

Not, in fact, the sort of act you would expect a computer to be of the remotest help with. Go back ten or fifteen years and the club circuit could afford to pay for a group to play every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, but as the money got tighter, the size of bands got smaller. To keep costs down it became common for singers to pay studio musicians to record a backing tape, but the initial investment for this would have cost Dave and Rose a small fortune in session fees. Although Dave is a drummer turned guitarist, his keyboard skills are reasonably limited so a period of trying to record their own backing tapes proved none too successful.

Reading about MIDI they decided to use a small dedicated sequencer along with a Roland sampling keyboard that is multi-timbral. "The disadvantage was that the sequencer could only correct minor timing errors quickly although it could record at a much slower pace and then be taken up to speed. The other problem was that it was a pain if you made a mistake. It took so much time fiddling about trying to pinpoint the bum note that it was quicker to start that particular track over again. A few months back they therefore invested some gig money into an ST 1040 plus C-Lab's Creator. This provides them with visual editing and sections of songs can be linked together with little more than the sweep of the mouse.

They opted for the Soundbits 3D program which stores back-ups of their sound patches. Songs for the set are assembled while timing and even adding or doubling up on sections can be made before dumping out to the small PR100 Roland sequencer which they use live. The computer has enabled them to use their equipment in a much easier and far more practical manner.

WHY COMPUTERS MEAN LOWER COSTS FOR MUSICIANS...

In the professional world it is very common for musicians to build up tracks at home – store the sequences (and in some cases the sounds) on disk and then use a studio that they know has the same soft- and hardware. Rather than rehearse for hours or waste valuable studio time, everything is prepared beforehand.

For the gigging musician a computer can save pounds in setting up sounds on the synths, pounds in storing sounds of the synths if you use what is known as a generic patch librarian, which in essence goes around to any piece of MIDI equipment and takes a copy of its memory, be it sounds or patterns.

As you will see, many acts use sequencing as an essential part of the set. Using a tiny LCD display on dedicated sequencers will save time and trouble and allow the musician to put his or her backing sequences together with less frustration and hence more attention to detail. Time is money, and besides which, a decently sequenced set gets you more work and sounds the part. Despite a certain amount of objections to this way of working, I have always been a believer in the maxim, 'Talent will out'.

JAMES ASHER

James works mainly from the 16 track studio at his home in London and writes music primarily for music libraries and television. To date he has music uses as theme tunes for the world Chess Championships, a series called Gems and it has cropped up as background music for things as diverse as Tomorrows World and The Russ Abbot Show! He also runs a new-age record company called Lumina which has had three releases so far.

James started by sending tapes of short, almost sci-fi, sound effects to libraries made on his Roland Jupiter 8 as he figured that it was a good idea to pick on a topic that perhaps hadn't been exploited. Its acceptance and subsequent use led him to further work and more equipment – at present for his main machine he uses an Akai/Linn MPC60 dedicated MIDI-sequencer in conjunction with an Akai S1000 sampler and a host of other synths, mainly the Korg MI. The new-age music occupies a large portion of his time and for this it is the sound and blend of the instruments that is important.

He has an Amiga which at present he uses mainly for graphics but he has recently used the speech synthesis package on it as part of his new sound library CD 'Artificial Brain'. Although he saw the Amiga 'Music-X' package and viewed it with interest he is very happy with the sequencer he has, his point being that he has worked with the Akai for so long and is at one with the way it works. Like any well-used piece of creative soft- or hardware, it has become an extension of his hands and consequently is very fast to work with.

Setting up the record company was and still is a lot of work, he would advise anybody who is thinking of doing this to work out the distribution - say a mail order or a particular society that may be interested, and to have more than one album to be released initially. Also it is useful to have a partner to share the problems – both practical and financial.

D110 WARNING

In issue 22 I reviewed the Soundbits 3D sound editor for the Roland D10, D20 and D110. It transpires that as far as the D110 tone module goes Roland have been moving the MIDI addresses internally without making it public knowledge. Consequently 3D, in common with all other D110 programmers has problems in communicating with some models. The only way to tell what model you have is to switch off, then power up holding buttons number 1, 3, and 5 down on the lower row of buttons and that is counting from the left. Anything higher than mk1.06 and most programs won't work. However if you have the latest mk1.10 everything should be OK. If in doubt ring Roland on 01 568 4578.

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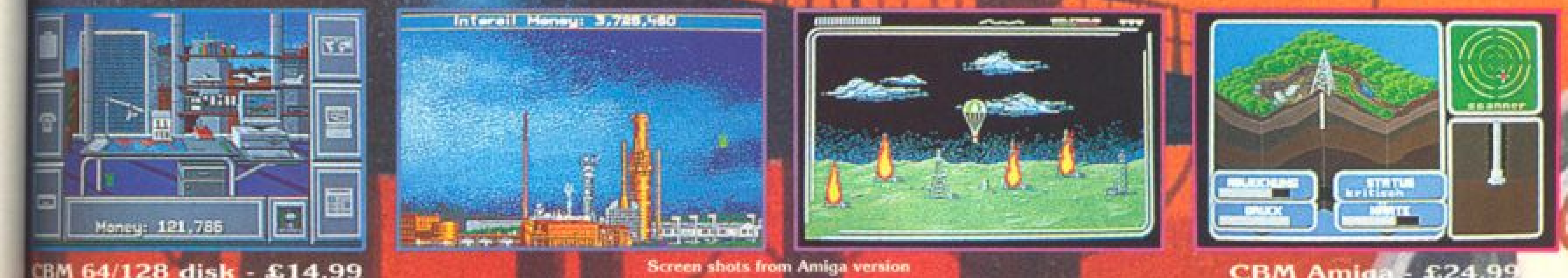

Screen shots from Amiga version

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'Vigilante bears an astonishing resemblance to its arcade parent' **ST Format**

Crash 86%
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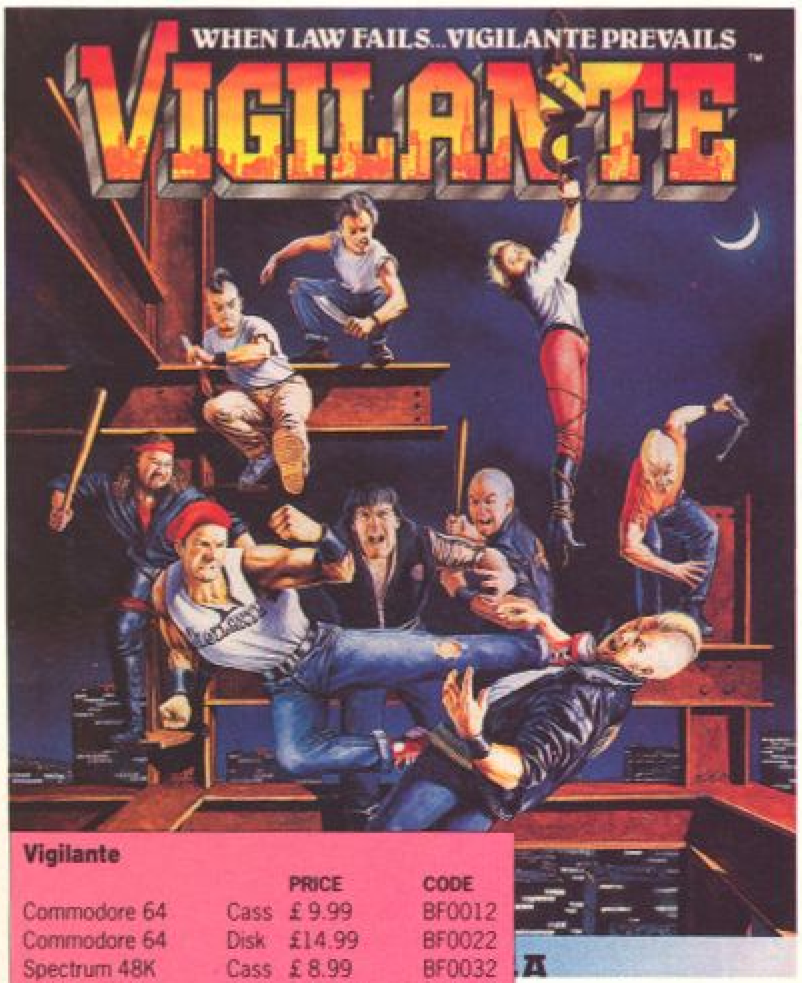

Vigilante

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The New Zealand Story
from Ocean

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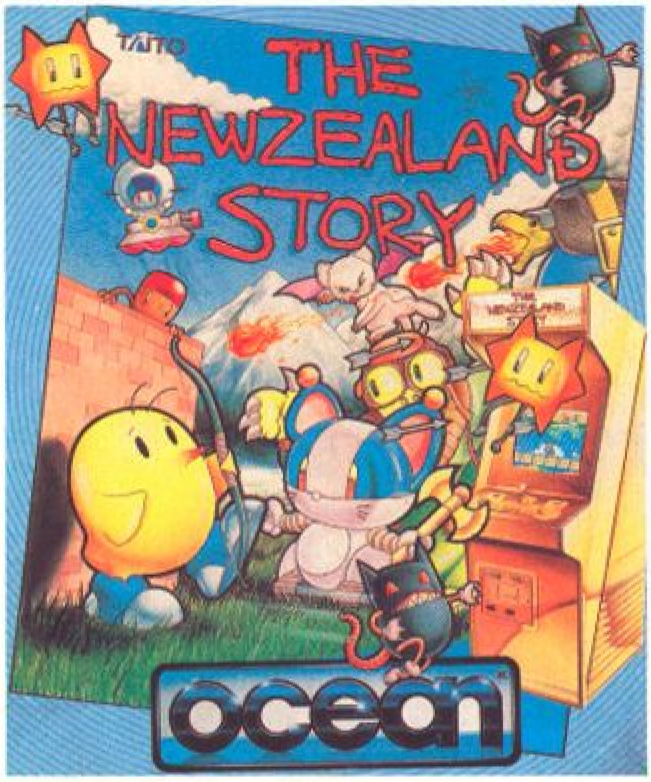
New Zealand Story is incredibly cute. This is an amazingly addictive game, and the difficulty tuning has been set just right.

Amiga Format 94%



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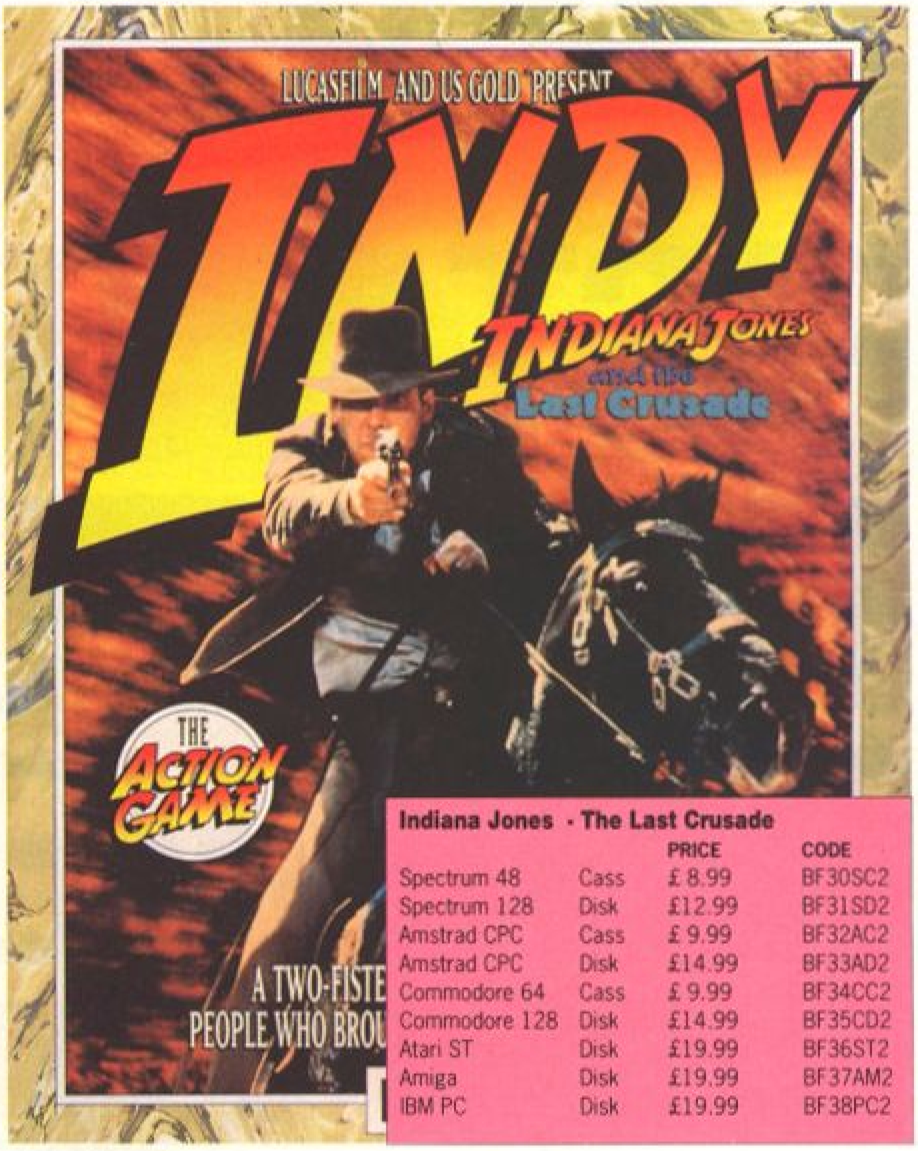

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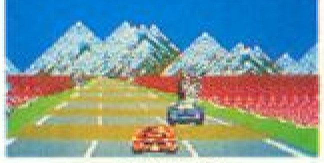

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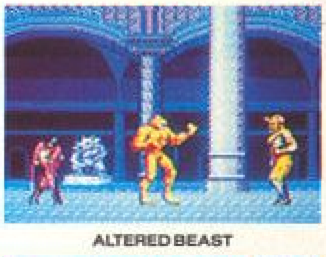

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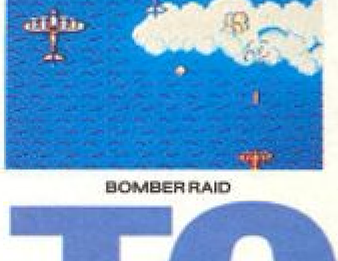

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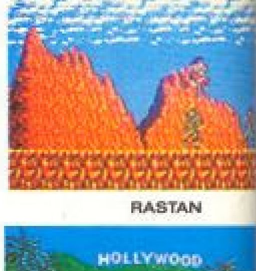

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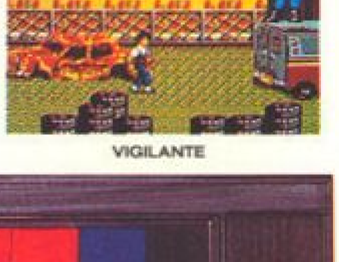

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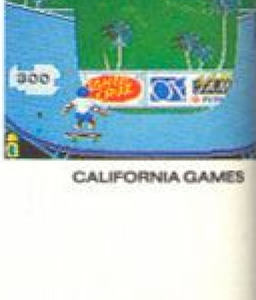

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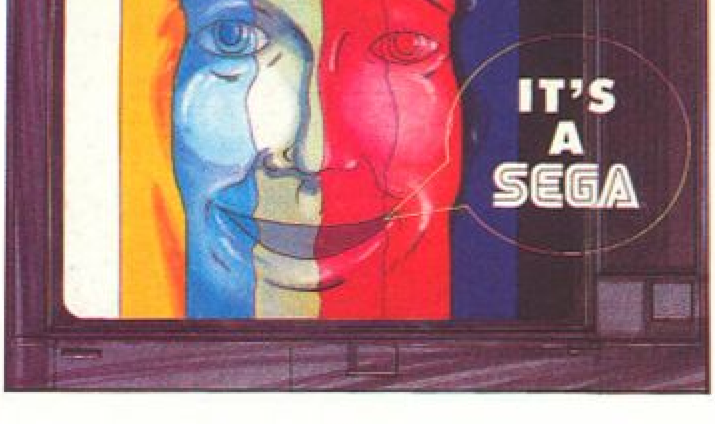

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HOUND OF SHADOW

Sneak preview of Electronic Arts' new RPG/text adventure

Electronic Arts have really given RPG'ers value for money over the past few years with titles like *The Bards Tale* series and *Wasteland*. There's just one fly in the ointment – Interplay, the company responsible for these glowing titles, have decided to go it alone and publish their own games. Where does that leave Elecronic Arts?

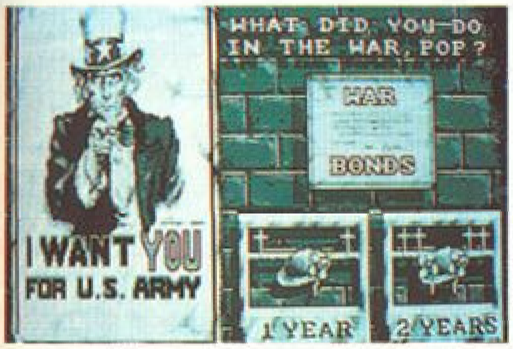
Developing products like *Hound of Shadow*, that's where. Obviously keen to maintain their reputation, EA are putting their all into this little number, and to keep up the continuity, RPG elements play a major part in the game.

However, and this should be good news for some mainstream gamesters, EA are keen to 'demystify' RPG. Not only that, but they're aiming to have the best of both worlds in the game by strengthening the traditional graphic adventure element.

'We didn't want to produce another object-oriented adventure game with illogical puzzles,' said product manager Jos Ellis, 'instead we went for a knowledge based game where progress depends on the accumulation of skills and information.'

The program, developed by Eldritch Games, takes a leaf out of Infocom's book by capitalising on the fashionable attraction of H.P.Lovecraft's horror stories, though *Hound of Shadow* takes its subject rather more seriously than *Lurking Horror*. The scenario is set in the 1920's and revolves around a contemporary map of central London – particularly the Soho/New Oxford Street area, which is pretty horrific even today, let alone sixty years ago.

You begin by attending a seance at which you discover that a certain Adept Karmi is actually a fraud, but – more surprisingly – he is able to channel threatening and apparently genuine messages from some diabolic agency. Without giving the game away, the rest of the action involves gathering information as you move towards a confrontation with the ungodly.



Part of the character definition routine: all choices are presented in graphical form. In this case, you have to specify what your character did in the war. Beware: too much war experience may sharpen your skills, but it will also render you liable to fits of insanity!

CHARACTER POINTS

Like any RPG-based game, the first thing you do in *Hound of Shadow* is define your game persona. There are no 'parties' in this game – it's just you versus the universe. You start by choosing sex, age, and (perversely) your birth date. The computer then automatically generates values for eight main attributes that include ratings for physical attractiveness and height as well as the usual strength, dexterity and so on.

Strangely, you don't get to see exactly what these values are. Instead, the computer prints out a description of your character, dwelling on your good and bad points, as in 'You are good looking, of average height, and extremely clumsy...'. There's reason behind this, however. EA were determined not to adopt the 'dice-and-data' approach to RPG'ing, since they felt that the complexity of many traditional RPG's put people off.

Personally, I rather like tables of numbers that tell me exactly how my character is defined, but I can understand the motives here. And reading a bespoke description of my persona, running to several lines of character analysis, was an interesting experience!

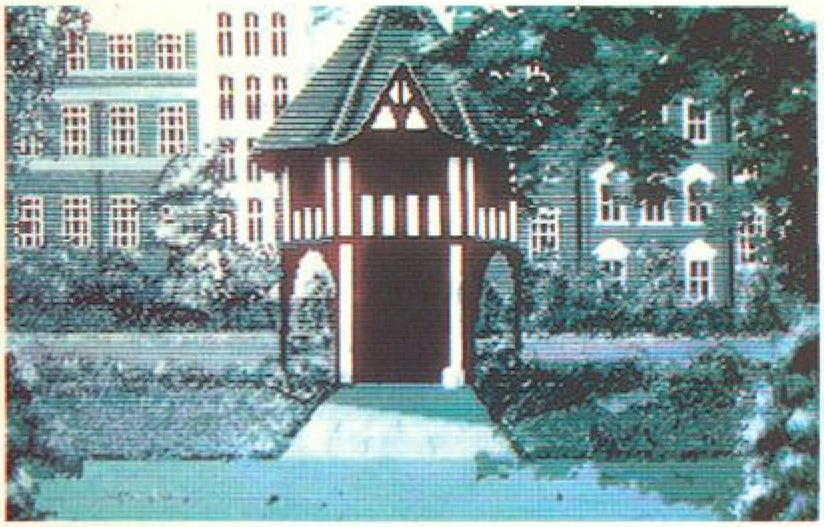
In addition to the normal character attributes, you can choose a profession from several on offer, ranging from journalist to historian.

Your attributes do not change during a game, but your skills do, and it's here that the program becomes a little more conventional. There are many different skills to master and these, in conjunction with your profession, are all initially set-up using attractive graphical displays, bar charts, and icons. If you felt earlier that the computer was defining your character for you, you soon lose that feeling at this point.

Skills are particularly significant when combined with certain professions – a historian with good anthropological skills, for example, might be able to spot that the infamous Adept Karmi's turban is actually tied the wrong way round. All this means that the progress of the game is clearly and unistakeably influenced by your character attributes, which makes a change from some RPG's where the only thing that seems to matter is how much strength you have left.

Skills not only affect the things you notice, but also how you interact with other characters and objects, so choosing them carefully (using an attractive icon-driven menu) is vital to success in the game.

Once you've made your selection the program gives you a detailed text description of your character that runs to several lines. Sometimes these can be quite amusing, including such snippets as 'You are often called to sing at parties and are active with a knife!' or 'You are quite an air-ace and can read people like a book'.



Hound of Shadow boasts some beautiful digitised graphics that really enhance the atmosphere. The text isn't quite up to Infocom's Lurking Horror standard, but pics like these certainly help to make up the difference...

After this distinctly character-dominated opening, the game springs another surprise by apparently changing styles into a typical (but very accomplished) text adventure. The difference, however, is that you spend less time finding and using objects and more time interacting with other people, unearthing clues, and exploring. The textual descriptions are excellent (as are the graphics) and the parser, although it doesn't tell you which words it doesn't understand, is perfectly acceptable, including the useful GO TO (location) command as well as RAMSAVE, RAMLOAD, and good use of prepositions for looking 'behind' and 'underneath' things.

Once you're into the adventure, time begins to tick by in the game as well as in real life and although the pace is for the most part leisurely, you'll find that events suddenly accelerate once you get towards the end.

There's no doubt that *Hound of Shadow* is going to be a very attractive product when it hits the shelves. We were only able to test a pre-release version, so any definitive rating has to wait until we see the finished product. However, what we've seen leads us to believe that EA without Interplay is not quite the sob story you may have expected. Stand by for a series of games that could well end up by giving *Bards Tale* a run for its money...

● Steve Cooke

TOWER
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Tower of Babel is an intricate 3D strategy game involving an interconnecting network of towers, platforms and lifts all rendered in solid 3D with innovative light and shading techniques. Take cont of robot spiders and program them to solve proble and puzzles and interact with other creatures, suc as Pushers, Zappers and Grabbers. Alternatively, r time control is available to you at any time for instantaneous reaction to the game's developmen For the more adventurous among you, there is a complete game designer, allowing the constructio your own series of towers, platforms and lifts. Attempt to fox your friends with your own fiendish difficult creations. More than just a game, more tha just a puzzle – Tower of Babel is a whole new conc in strategy gaming.

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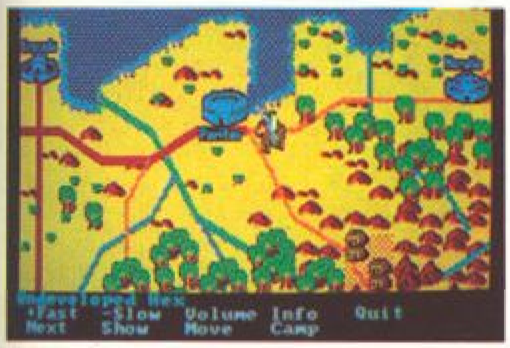
SWORD OF ARAGON

SSI give you the chance to indulge in a little fantasy war-mongering...

It's a bureaucrat's life being a fantasy warlord. Slaying orcs is one thing but winning popular opinion with a few well-chosen tax cuts while you try to maintain a decent level of business investment is a task more suited to Maggie than a Vizigoth (Some difference - Ed)!

The medieval combat and economic management game has been around as long as I can remember. Feudal lords were trying to take over the neighbouring kingdom in much the same fashion back in the Dark Ages of the ZX81 (so called because the screen went dark every time it had to think!). But SSI isn't the sort of company to merely recreate a 16K, 8-bit game on the PC. With a reputation as one of the longest established specialist strategy houses you can be sure that *Sword of Aragon* has a bright, sharp edge when it comes to new features.

The first is an element of everybody's flavour of the moment – role playing. It's no longer enough just to be a anonymous player. You take on the guise of the son and heir to the Duke of Aladda, a just and good ruler who had sworn to rid the land of nasties and return order and wealth where now there is only chaos. Unfortunately for him he popped his clogs before he could complete this ambitious, not to say somewhat familiar, task.



Sword of Aragon – wargaming with fantasy elements

You also get to choose your character type from Knight, Warrior, Mage, Ranger or Priest. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages, plus combat or magical abilities. You start with several noble supporters and others will join you as play progresses and their character class will be influenced by yours. You'll also advance by levels, depending on the daring deeds you do, just like any other good rpg character.

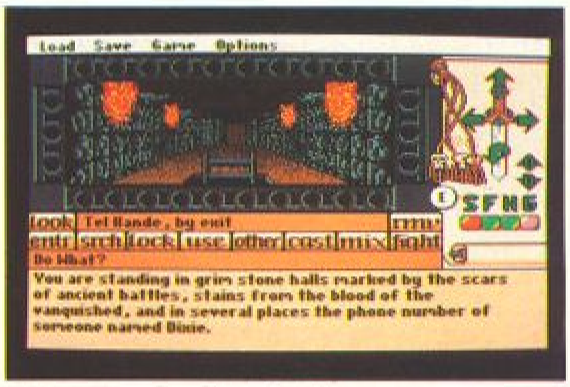
Before you can set off adventuring you'll need to don your Nigel Lawson armour and take care of the peasants at home. Taking a tip from Tory policies I immediately dropped the tax rate a couple of percent while increasing basic agricultural spending. Result: a happy populace, which is useful when recruiting. Commands in this section are easy to enter, using a series of menus, and there's plenty of information to save you from slipping into the red, which in these barbaric times means bloodshed - your own!

The citizens got even more delighted when we moved out of the World Game and into battle with a band or orcs who came visiting from the north west. Arranging your troops will be familiar to seasoned wargamers. You select units with a square cursor and issue commands from a menu using initial letters.

Battle orders are sufficiently varied, providing both all out attack and more defensive patterns. There are ranged weapons and even spells, which become stronger as you gain experience. If you temporarily tire of telling the troops to attack you can switch to auto pilot, merely choosing how aggressive you want them to be. The micro may not fight the best tactics but it will suffice while you slope off for a coffee.

After the first fight you should find yourself in possession of one of your father's belongings. Bringing together the Scepter of the East the Crown of the West and the Amulet of Aladda appears to be a vital part of solving the quest. You should also receive a new recruit who's so impressed by your military skills he signs up immediately. Then news of events around the kingdom will appear and it's up to you to choose which rumour to follow.

Play progresses in a succession of monthly economic decisions followed by movement and battle sequences, during which you'll uncover the secrets of the unexplored central areas of Aragon and try to control its settlements. You can't afford to neglect either aspect. Though ultimate victory can only be obtained by exploration and military means, you depend on the civilian population for the gold pieces to maintain your armies and the raw recruits who'll man them.



Do What?

You are standing in grim stone halls marked by the scars of ancient battles, stains from the blood of the vanquished, and in several places the phone number of someone named Dixie.

OK, we're cheating, but just as we went to press we got this sneak preview screenshot of EAt's new icon adventure, Keef the Thief. Coming soon to an ACE page near you...

SSI describes this as 'epic' and its grand scale is undeniable. For hardened strategists the sheer complexity will probably override the sense of deja vu about the scenario. But newcomers to the genre may well be overwhelmed by the number of factors under their control. It's also a rather coldly mechanical experience compared with rpg's such as the Dungeons and Dragons series (see box). If you really want to relate to your characters, you may find this Sword rather rusty.

● John Minson

CHIPS AND COUNTERS

Sword of Aragon is an interesting refinement of an ancient genre. Unfortunately its designers still seem trapped by some of the traditions of wargaming...

Reading the manual reveals the designers' ancestry: references to hexes and stacking limits indicate that their thinking is still firmly rooted in cardboard counters and hexagonal grids. it's a pity when you can do so much more in creative presentation with a computer.

However the number crunching power of the micro does free up the player from the vast and complex rule books and endless calculations which makes many traditional games so infuriating for all but the most dedicated players. The amount of time you'd spend cross-referencing tables and rolling die for a game of this scale would make it near impossible to play.

In the end *Sword of Aragon* is perhaps best seen as a computer simulation of board game. In this light it scores highly and will please players. But pure computer gamers should think carefully before buying.

LANDSCAPE 55
Fairly basic wargame style maps and blocky movement, but plenty to explore in the game...

ENCOUNTERS....................................65
Standard selection of fantasy beasts plus humans who will react individually depending on character. Combat is based on traditional wargaming techniques with easy commands and good options.

CHALLENGE.......................................85
Vast and complex – if anything, too much so. Could be offputting for the more casual fantasy gamer, but wargame addicts will have plenty to keep them busy.

SYSTEM 55
A very old-fashioned front-end, whether viewed from the adventure/RPG or the wargame angle. Programs like *UMS* and *Ultima V* are pushing the boundaries back fast, and *Aragon* doesn't seem to be keeping pace...

ACE RATING
755

Sword of Aragon attempts to cover every aspectof being a fantasy world ruler, from leading your troops into battle to maintaining a stable economy. It rather over-reaches itself, resulting in a game which will keep strategy obsessives engrossed but will prove too involved for many people.

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NO PROBLEM!

Just room this month for help with ST Chronoquest (which everyone seems to be cursing over) and a few juicy tips for Manhunter new York. Keep those tippies coming in...

CHRONO QUEST THE SOLUTION

India: This is the first time period you must visit. Use the first disc in the slot. After the rematerialisation in India go W. Enter the house and USE your gloves on the man's hand. Go S, E, E, NE. USE the note the man gives you on the mahout. Enter the temple and USE the bottle in the water. Exit temple and ride elephant. Go to the man. USE water on his hand. Get key then go S, E. Go N. USE key on door. Go N. and get piece of punch card. Then go S, W, W. Get scroll and return in Explora. Press the switch with the push/pull icon to return home.

Egypt: The second time period you must visit. Remember to use the scroll. After the rematerialisation in Egypt go N, E, N, N. Look in hte bush at the left of the entrance. Get the amulet. Examine scroll. USE the push/pull icon to push the rocks with the combination that is written on the scroll. The combination is: top, top left, top right, top right. Go N, N. USE amulet on snakes. Go N,W. USE grapnel to get to the sarcophagus chambedr. USE the push/pull icon on the second, the third, the fourth and the fifth levers. Get the ring from the mummy. Close sarcophagus and get the piece of the punch card. Go down, then N. USE the turn icon on the second torch. Go down, S, S, W, S. Enter Explora and return to the chateau.

Prehistory: Make sure you can use your lighter for one more time. Go E. Get bone and grass. Then go E, NE. Get rock. USE grass on woods. Light lighter. USE lighter on woods. Get brunch. Go E, S. Look in skull. Get piece of card and return to Explora.

Maya: Find the three stones, then go W, W, W. Look house. USE turn icon on statue. Get key. Go E, E, E, NE, NE, N, N, NW, NW, NE, E. USE gloves on bush. USE ring in hole. Wait until 13.00h. The beam will be reflected on the door. USE bone in door hole. Go up. USE key to unlock safe. Get punch card. Now you can make one punch card.

Alexis Kofteros - Nicosia, Cyprus.

MANHUNTER - NEW YORK.

Play the video game, do not tread on all th magic squares but go strait to the exit (se map), and note the order in which the thre balls are thrown and hit their targets.

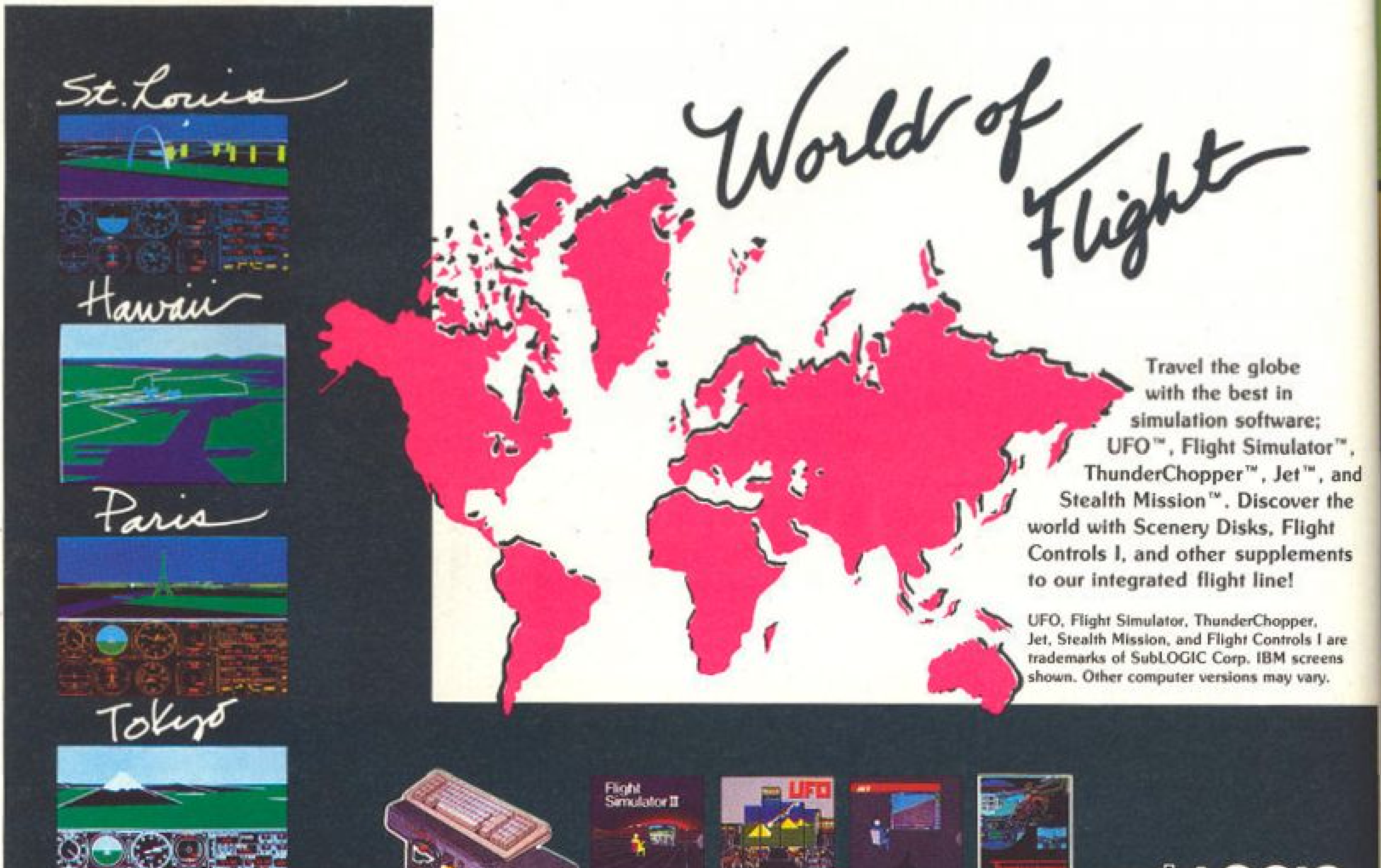
When at the fairground, play the midd game on the left, you will have to look at th left of the fairground on the main screen firs throw the balls in the order you noted on th arcade game.

M Whitton - Peacehaven

VIEWPOINT

'I'm sure that the top software houses always realised from the start that no matter how much advertising hype was lavished upon their adventures their sales would never even come near to the latest arcade game conversion, so is the reason for the dis-continuation of Text-only adventures because Level 9's or Infocom's sales-graph isn't showing any profit margin? I always hoped that these companies were producing these games, knowing that even though they weren't selling in fantastic amounts they were giving the minority of adventurers immense pleasure, and I always looked forward to new releases on the adventure front. Perhaps I was wrong...'

Stuart Mashall - Count Durham



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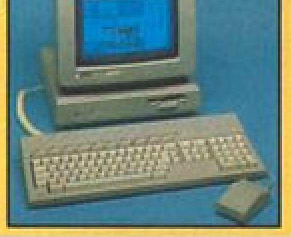

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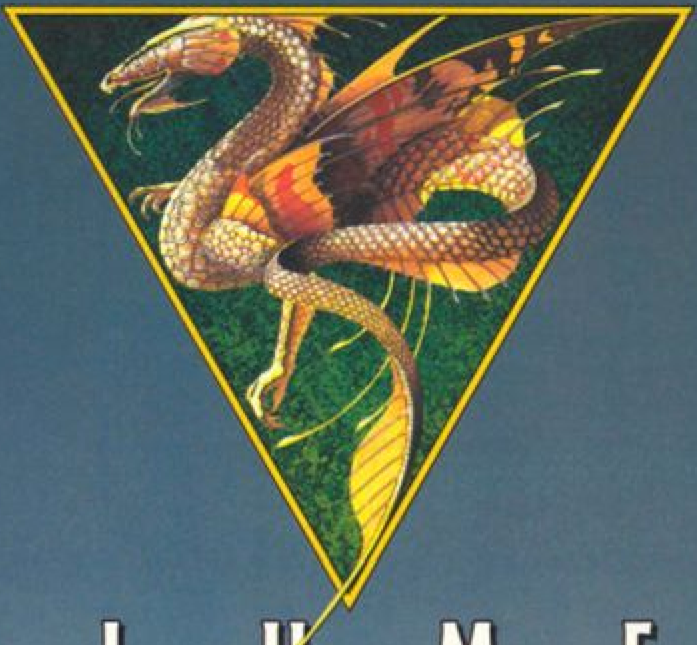

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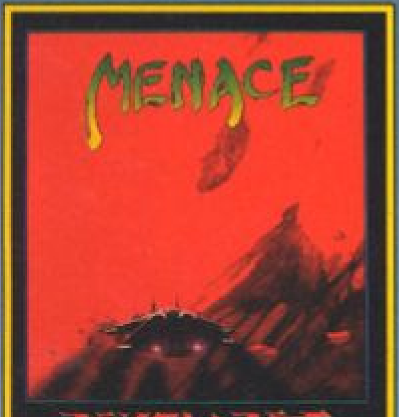

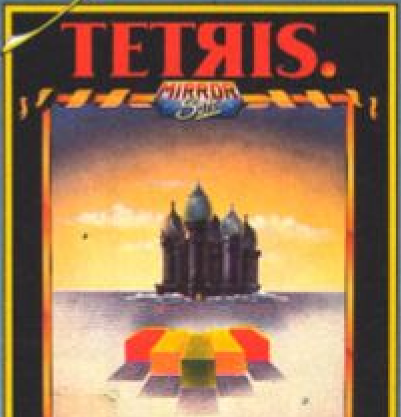

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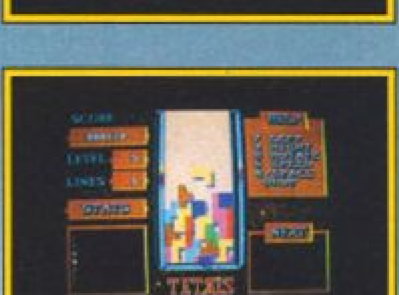

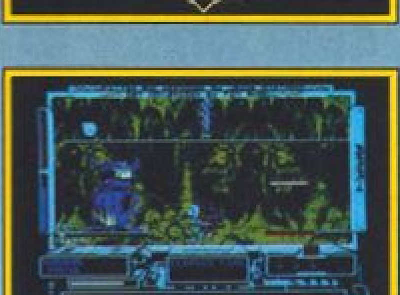

ST Amiga Format - Gold Disk Award
"Menace will have you hooked for hours on end. The addictive "just one more game" feeling hits you every time."

ST Action
"This game is non-stop action all the way - miss it at your peril."

Page 6
"Menace is a superb game which is impressively presented. Menace excels in terms of playability. It is a highly addictive game with enough variety for you to keep wanting to come back for more."

Sinclair User - 10
"The most original and playable game in an age."

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ST Action
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JUST HOW WEIRD ARE YOU?

It goes without saying that you're pretty odd. After all, you wouldn't have a computer, or be reading ACE, if you weren't. But just lately we've been receiving a lot of mail from people who want to know just how weird they are. Some of you are just a little bit worried that ownership of a computer marks you with a shameful stigma: you suspect you may be a complete nerd, and you do not feel happy about it. Other readers positively revel in their strangeness, like hogs in filth, and simply wish to confirm that they are more peculiar than the next chap with a 68000 chip and a copy of Populous.

Now this specially commissioned ACE Questionnaire will let both sets of computer users discover their WQ (Weirdness Quotient). The higher your score, the crazier you are. And yes folks – one size fits all: depending on which of the two groups you belong to, you will either be reassured or worried to death.

HOW TO TAKE THE TEST

The ACE WQ Test is best taken after a prolonged spell of game-playing or, if this is inconvenient, after several hours of indiscriminate TV watching. Either of these activities should induce a suitably blank state of mind. If you can also arrange to eat large amounts of junk food beforehand, so much the better.

The WQ Test consists of 20 multiple-choice questions. Simply read the question and then answer it (truthfully) by selecting one of the choices. Note down your answers and then turn to page 102 to see what your score adds up to. Then read the appropriate psychological profile for the score you have achieved.

The whole test should take no more than 15 minutes, although utter nerds may find it takes up to three hours.

THE QUESTIONS

1. For some reason or other you find yourself at a party rather than at home with your faithful computer. A pretty girl seems to be trying to pick you up. Do you

(a) Let yourself be picked up, but feel guilty about betraying your computer?

(b) Tell her to get lost because you've planned to finish your latest Infocom game when you get home?

(c) Ask a friend what the hell she's after?

2. You are engrossed in a lengthy session of Tetris when your mother bursts into your room screaming that the house is on fire. Do you

(a) Say "OK, I'll be down when I've finished this level"?

(b) Carry on playing regardless?

(c) Try to escape but not before saving your computer and entire games collection first?

3. After several years of non-stop games playing your computer decides to give up and explodes violently. Do you

(a) Break down in a flood of uncontrollable grief?

(b) Not notice that anything is wrong?

(c) Shed a few tears – then borrow your father's credit card and buy a better model?

4. Your come home one day to discover that your younger brother has 'accidentally' wiped all your discs. Do you

(a) Kill him?

(b) Torture him horribly, and then kill him?

(c) Not notice that anything is wrong?

5. Your girlfriend decides enough is enough and tells you that either the computer goes, or she does. Do you:

(a) Not notice that anything is wrong?

(b) Pass her a tenner and ask her if she wouldn't mind popping out for a couple of blank disks before she goes?

(c) Beg her not to go, and resort to surreptitious games at three o' clock in the morning?

6. Your doctor tells you that if you don't stop playing games you will go blind. Do you

(a) Try to cut down to two packages a week?

(b) Ignore him, but put in an advance order for a guide dog just in case?

(c) Wonder where the voice is coming from?

7. Your parents force you to go on a fortnight's cruise with them, leaving your computer behind. Do you

(a) Slip overboard when they're not looking and swim back?

(b) Smuggle your computer and entire games collection through customs by disguising it all as a packed lunch?

(c) Agree to go but spend the whole holiday playing the arcade machines on board ship?

8. Ace reveals exclusive details of Sir Clive Sinclair's latest invention: a supercharged C5 equipped with an on-board ZX81. Do you

(a) Break down in a fit of uncontrollable laughter?

(b) Wonder if it will run your whole collection of games?

(c) Rush out immediately and buy one?

9. Your friend invites you round to show you how he has managed to forecast global economic trends for the next fifty years on his 80386 PC using his home-grown financial program. Do you

(a) Try hard to stay awake, but fail?

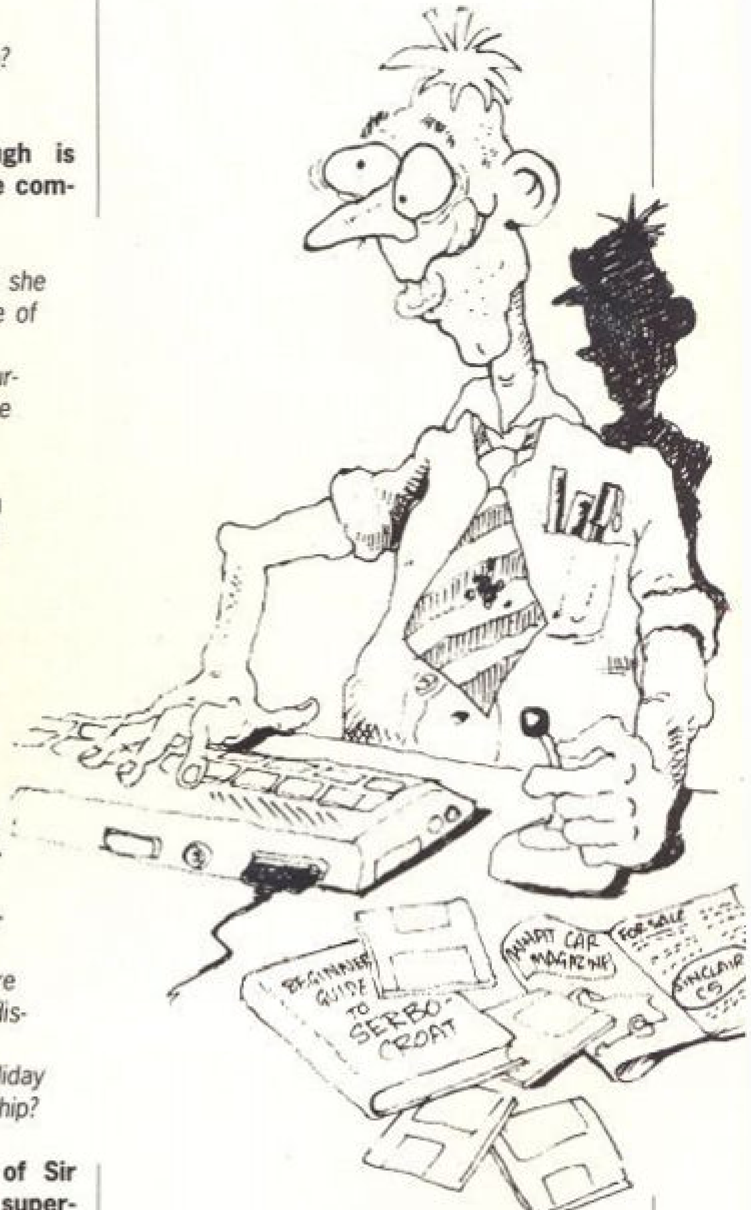
(b) Think how lucky you are to have such an incredibly brilliant friend?

(c) Go home and try to write a better program on your Dragon 64?

10. Your father approaches you about the horrendously expensive items of computer equipment listed on his Access bill. Do you

(a) Try to get him hooked on games so that you don't have to send it all back?

(b) Tell him it's all essential for your Serbo-Croat GCSE?



(c) Eat all the Access bills before he gets them?

11. Your mother goes on a computer awareness course and begins using your machine to produce knitting patterns. Do you

(a) Deliberately infect all her disks with the nastiest virus you can get your hands on?

(b) Charge her by the hour?

(c) Wonder why your latest efforts on Deluxe Paint III all look like Fair Isle sweaters?

12. Faced with the choice between buying the latest version of your favourite programming language and part 3 of your latest game, do you
(a) Buy the game?
(b) buy the language?
(c) Not applicable because you'd never in a million years have such a thing as a 'favourite programming language'?

13. Your mother complains that there are 'bugs' in your bedroom. Do you
(a) Promise to tidy up soon?
(b) Reach for the machine code monitor and get hacking?
(c) Ask if she knows just whereabouts in the program they are?

14.A Macintosh is
(a) A desirable computer?
(b) A quaint word for a raincoat?
(c) An apple?

15. Your ideal summer holiday is
(a) Two weeks of sun, sea, sand and ....
(b) One week of sun, sea sand etc. and one week of intensive Populous
(c) Two weeks of intensive Populous

16. Which of the following figures do you consider to have had the most influence on the development of civilisation (as we know it)?
(a) Aristotle
(b) Turing
(c) Jeff Minter

17. Which of the following statements most closely describes your feelings about computers?
(a) "I adore them"
(b) "I really like them"
(c) "They're OK"

18. When someone starts talking to you about blitters, sprites and screen refresh rates, do your eyes
(a) Light up with enthusiasm?
(b) Glaze over with boredom?
(c) Close?

19. When hand-held consoles become available in the shops, will you
(a) Ignore them until they are really cheap?
(b) Buy one immediately, whatever the price?
(c) Persuade a friend to buy one, whatever the price?

20. "Pong" is
(a) A nasty smell
(b) One of the first and still one of the greatest video games
(c) An archaic video game

THE SCORES

1.
(a) 1. This is a thoroughly normal reaction.
(b) 3. Pretty odd. We know Infocom games are good, but.....
(c) 5. Totally weird.

2.
(a) 3. Some things are more important than mere fires.
(b) 5. But you can take things too far.
(c) 1. Very normal.

3.
(a) 5. It's only a computer, after all.
(b) 1. A bit too normal – and heartless.
(c) 3. Grief, yes – but let's keep it in proportion.

4.
(a) 3. Let the punishment fit the crime.
(b) 5. Very sadistic, very weird.
(c) 1. Appallingly normal.

5.
(a) 5. Strange as strange can be.
(b) 3. You callous, self-centred creep...
(c) 1. It's hard keeping a balance between love and computers.

6.
(a) 1. Eyesight is a precious gift – and it comes in handy for shoot-em-ups.
(b) 3. A sensible precaution.
(c) 5. You've had it.

7.
(a) 5. But can you swim?
(b) 3. The best of both worlds.
(c) 1. A perfectly understandable stratagem.

8.
(a) 1. You can still see C5s in certain parts of North London.
(b) 3. You'll get over it.
(c) 5. Stark, staring bonkers.

9.
(a) 1. No, your type wouldn't be interested.
(b) 3. Admiration is only natural.
(c) 5. But emulation is lunacy.

10.
(a) 3. Nice try.
(b) 1. It might just work.
(c). 5. You won't get much credit for that.

11.
(a) 5. Nuts and nasty.
(b) 1. The profit-motive is exceedingly ordinary.
(c) 3. Knit one, pearl one.

12.
(a) 3. Mildly strange.
(b) 5. Very strange.
(c) 1. Ordinary.

13.
(a) 1. Very literal-minded interpretation.
(b) 3. Not a minute to waste...
(c) 5. Completely out of touch with reality.

14.
(a) 5. You know what you want.
(b) 1. Kinky.
(c) 3. But is it edible?

15.
(a) 1. Just like (nearly) everyone else.
(b) 3. Almost 'normal'....
(c) 5. Utterly gaga.

16.
(a) 1. Greece – cradle of civilization, etc.
(b) 3. You could make out a case for him.
(c) 5. Clearly the right answer.

17.
(a) 5. A bit excessive.
(b) 3. A strong bond of affection exists.
(c) 1. Neither hot nor cold.

18.
(a) 5. Are you kidding?
(b) 3. Even enthusiasts can only stand so much.
(c) 1. Research shows that 98% of the population reacts in this way.

19.
(a) 1. Cheapskate
(b) 5. Money's no object when you're in the grip of a great obsession.
(c) 3. You're keen – but not that keen.

20.
(a) 1. Where've you been for the past 15 years?
(b) 5. A fan.
(c) 3. Indifference.

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50 -75	You are well on the way to weirdness. Your computer and its software are of great importance to you, although you still remember to brush your teeth and change your socks once a week. Gradually you will lose your old 'normal' habits and move on to the stage where....
75-100	You are totally and utterly obsessed by the computer. Nothing can compare with the joy and the response your trusty machine and your favourite games can supply. Social intercourse is of no interest to you, unless it is related to the microchip. you would mug your granny if you needed to raise the cash for a new piece of software. You are weird – but whether that bothers you is another matter altogether; as our psychologist says, "Weirdness is in the monitor of the beholder.'

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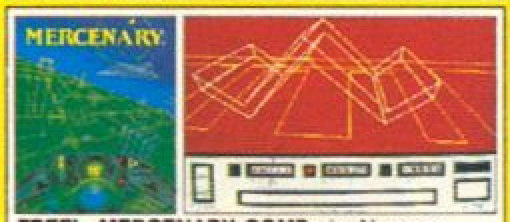

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CYBERSPACE

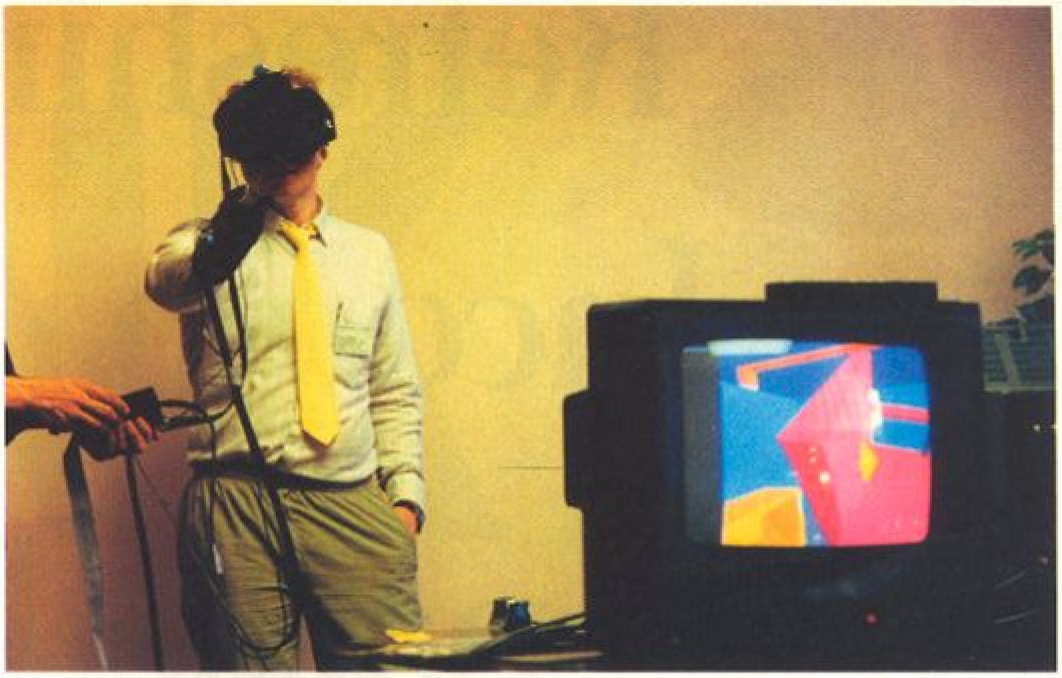
AS WE GO TO PRESS, NEWS ARRIVES OF A STARTLING NEW GRAPHICS DEVELOPMENT

Simon Hodson turns his head to survey the small room, and, walking to the opposite corner, picks up a chair and replaces it a good five feet from its original position. However mundane it may appear, this simple action could be one giant leap for the gamesplaying mankind as neither the room nor the chair actually exist, they're nothing more than computer-generated images in a three dimensional 'virtual reality'.

This is not science fiction, it's not even early theoretical research for some far-fetched experiment which may show results in the distant future – Simon Hodson is marketing manager of Autodesk Inc, and the system which allows him to disappear into a world inside his computer is already up and running. Its name? Cyberspace.

Initially developed as a way to manipulate robots in dangerous situations by remote control, Cyberspace is now on the verge of becoming a commercially viable reality for users of Computer Aided Design (CAD) systems.

Cyberspace uses customised software to generate a 'real' 3D environment. This in itself is nothing new, as CAD packages have always carried out this basic function, allowing designers to view their creations from all angles without going to the expense of building a prototype. Where Cyberspace differs is in the unconventional hardware interface, which when donned by the user actually allows entry inside the computer-generated image.



Help! I'm about to be crushed by a giant pink polygon!

Simon Hodson reaches out into an invisible world

THE HARDWARE

The hardware consists mainly of a bulky 'helmet' (nicknamed 'Autospex') which incorporates two high definition LCDs, projecting a stereoscopic image to each eye (in a similar fashion to the crude red and green glasses used to view '3D' movies). Also mounted in this contraption is a tracking device which correlates head movement with the displayed image, allowing the user as wide a field of vision as exists in the real world.

Movement within the newly created environment could be achieved by simply walking about, but this would cause problems if the computer-generated image was larger than the user's actual environment (what looks like a door in Cyberspace could actually be a solid wall in real life – ouch!). This problem is overcome by the second piece of hardware – The Orb. As the name suggests, this is a spherical contraption which is used to 'move' the environment: rotate the orb forward and objects will appear to move away and so on.

But for complete interaction, the user needs to be able to manipulate any objects within the new world with his or her own hands, and this is where the third piece of hardware – The Dataglove – comes into its own. Perhaps the most innovative invention of the lot, this glove is electronically connected to the rest of the hardware and allows a computer-generated image of the users hand to precisely mimic the movements of the real thing. Unfortunately the system is currently confined to using a single glove, as attempts at linking up a second have so far ended in failure.

Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about Cyberspace however is the cost of research so far: the Autodesk team in Sausalito, California has so far only laid out a paltry $26,000 on hardware, mainly because of the company's policy of developing systems for existing computers (mainly IBM-compatibles).

This relatively low cost is an encouraging sign for those who would like to see the Cyberspace technology incorporated into future games machines – and Simon Hodson is quick to point out the system's suitability for adventure style games in particular.

Imagine a Falcon dogfight played out 'inside' a three-dimensional cockpit above a solid landscape, or even running onto a full-sized Kick Off football pitch with 10 computerised teammates. Scenes like these may still be some way off, but Autodesk's research team is bringing them closer all the time.

Who knows? Someday soon you may never have to enter the 'real' world again...

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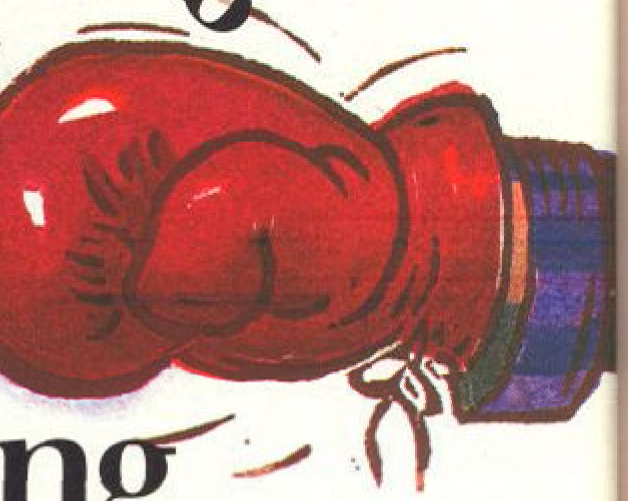

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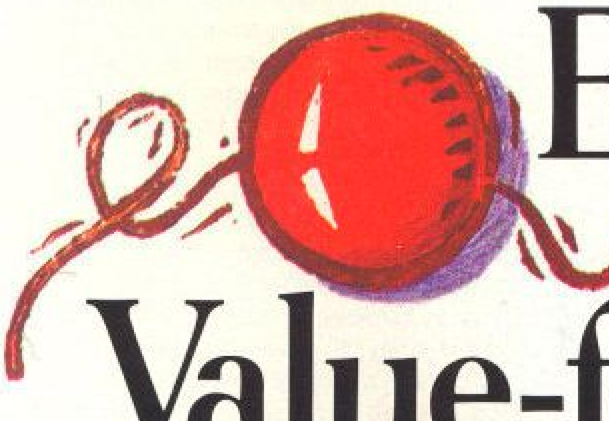

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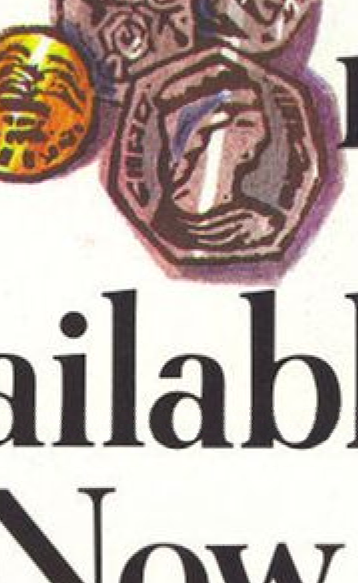

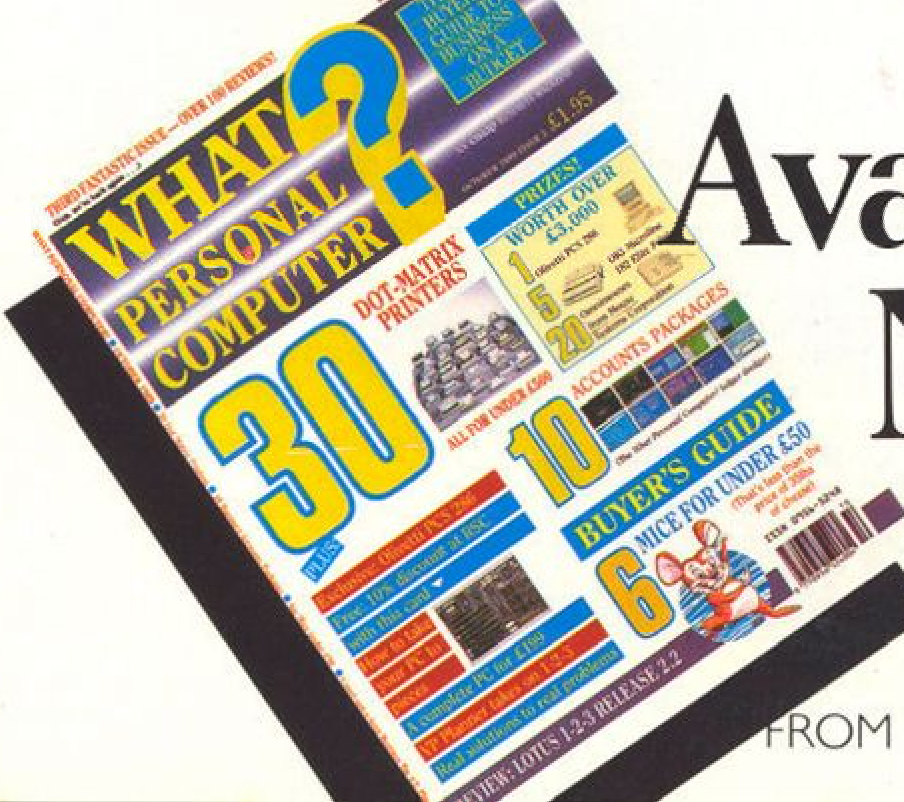
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IN THE PINK

THE LINE-UP

108
The ACE software guide – completely updated and including two new sections: RPG and Wargames. Whatever your taste, this is the definitive list of the games you have to have...

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Fancy yourself as JR? Of course you don't, but that needn't stop you from getting in an entry in this Oil Imperium compo and winning a pair of genuine leather macho boots...

118
The ACE Crossword, and your chance to win a prize.

120
The indispensible ACE diary includes news of a Hi-Definition TV show, and the Editor's birthday.

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Shadow of the Beast is one of the most impressive technical achievements we've seen on the Amiga, and it comes with an original Roger Dean T-shirt as well. Now a selection of lucky readers can walk away with a free copy – could it be you?

122
Pot-pourri!
This is the last page of the magazine to be written...Even WE don't know what's going to be on it!

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The ACE Puzzle.
Dash your brains out on this one, chum.

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Gasp! Could this really be the death of N'Gar Thrombobo?? Here's hoping...

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The ACE Readers Pages – your ads, your messages, your offers of help, on the pages that belong to the people...

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Lists, supplied by intrepid readers...

GAMES YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE

All of the following games are ACE RATED: that means they're all red hot masterpieces of computer entertainment. Some of the games have been around a long time: these games are simply marked with the ACE CLASSIC flash, and rest assured, they're all superb pieces of software and are well deserving of the title.

ARCADE STYLE

Including coin-op conversions. Games with a high fun factor and plenty of addictiveness feature here.

ARKANOID

Imagine ● Spectrum £7.95cs ● C64 £8.95cs £12.95dk ● Amstrad £8.95cs £14.95dk ● Atari XL/XE £8.95cs ● Atari ST £14.95dk ● MSX £8.95cs ● IBM PC £19.95dk

Conversion from *Arkanoid* the coin-op, in its turn the best version of the classic *Breakout*. Simple in concept: the player controls a bat at the base of the screen, whizzing it left and right. The object is to keep a small ball in play, bouncing it off the bat to destroy formations of bricks in the top half of the screen. Eliminate all the bricks and move on to the next of 33 screens. Clever extra features contribute to the addictiveness. As a faithful coin-op conversion, *Arkanoid* comes out top, but for a different slant on the same theme and some nifty music, try ASL's *Impact*, which also builds up the difficulty levels more gradually.

★ ACE CLASSIC

BOUNDER

Gremlin Graphics ● Spectrum £7.95cs ● C64 £9.95cs £12.95dk ● Amstrad £8.95cs £13.95dk

A great arcade bounce-em-up, and very addictive too. You guide a ball as it bounces from one platform to another, high above the vertically scrolling landscape. Land on marked squares and you can stay aloft longer or gain a mystery bonus. Fill in a gap or hit one of the game's many nasties, however, and you'll lose a life. Bonus bouncing sections at the end of each level help vary the pace, and those tough gaps really keep you coming back for more. Bright, witty graphics, great music – and it's so playable.

★ ACE CLASSIC

BUBBLE BOBBLE

Firebird ● Spectrum £7.95cs ● C64 £8.95cs £12.95dk ● Amstrad £8.95cs £14.95dk ● Atari ST £19.95dk

Playability is the essence of this two-player coin-op conversion. You and a friend play bubble-blowing dinosaurs, travelling through 100 maze-and-platform screens, fighting off the 'bullies' by encapsulating them in your bubbles to turn them into juicy fruit. More firepower and various bonuses await as you reach the more difficult later screens. Enormously good fun, if a little on the cutesy side. Can also be played as one player against the computer.

★ ACE RATED 958

CONQUEROR

Superior ● Archimedes £24.95dk (Amiga and ST versions under development)

Drive around in your very own tank! Blast the enemy in close combat and plan your strategy for the campaign. This is a tricky game to get to grips with, but if you persevere you'll find you soon become mesmerised by the thing. If you ain't got a 1Mb Archie though – forget it!

★ ACE RATED 931

ELIMINATOR

Hewson ● Spectrum £7.99cs £12.99dk ● C64 £9.99cs £14.99dk ● Amstrad £9.99cs £14.99dk ● Atari ST £19.99dk ● Amiga £19.99dk

Graphically wonderful roadway blast-em-up by John Phillips, which will twist your joystick inside-out. It'll even have you driving on the ceiling. Though it's tough to get to grips with at first, the addiction level's so great you'll keep coming back for more.

★ ACE RATED 904

EXOLON

Hewson ● Spectrum £7.95cs ● C64 £8.95cs £12.95dk ● Amstrad £8.95cs £14.95dk

Graphically superb horizontally scrolling shoot-em-up in which you run, duck and jump your way along a planet's surface blasting away at alien defences. A gun and a missile launcher are used to blast the foes, but if things are still too tough then you can grab an exoskeleton for extra protection and fire power.

★ ACE CLASSIC

NEW ZEALAND STORY

Ocean ● Spectrum £8.95cs, C64 £9.95cs, Amstrad £9.95cs, ST £19.99, Amiga £24.99

Although pipped at the post in a head to head with Rainbow Islands, New Zealand Story is not a game to be ruled out. It is immense fun to play, provides lots of varied action across amny levels. Definatly worth checking out.

★ ACE RATED 875

OIDS

Mirrorsoft ● Atari ST £19.99dk

A magnificent *Thrust*-ish blast. The Oids are relying on you to save them, but the Biocretes aren't going to let them go without throwing missiles, rockets and a number of other weapons at you. Included with the program is an edit facility that allows you to design your own planetoids – great stuff!

★ ACE RATED 969

PITSTOP 2

Epyx/US Gold ● Available only on Epyx Epics compilation ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● IBM PC £29.95dk (in compilation with *Winter Games* and *Summer Games 2*)

Thrilling racing game where the screen is split into two and you can race the computer or a friend. Lots of different Grand Prix circuits, tyre blow-outs and of course the all-important pitstops guarantee to give you hand cramp and your brain a real racing treat.

★ ACE CLASSIC

POWERDROME

Electronic Arts ● Atari ST £24.95dk

This superb arcade-style futuristic driving simulation will have you enthralled for months to come. It may not be terribly easy to get straight into but it's well worth perservering with. You'll be playing this for months.

★ ACE RATED 925

PURPLE SATURN DAY

Exxos ● Atari ST £24.95dk ● Amiga £24.95

A terrific mix of games that delivers punch both audio and visual. The consistently good gameplay ensures you'll enjoy playing each sub-game time and again. It's a little tricky to get the hang off, but master it and you'll be pleased you persevered.

★ ACE RATED 912

RAINBOW ISLANDS

Firebird, Spectrum £9.95cs £14.95dk, C64 £9.99cs $14.99dk, Amstrad £9.99cs £14.99dk, ST £24.99, Amiga £24.99

The sequel to Bubble Bobble is nothing short of fantastic. The graphics and sound are superb, as is the gameplay. One of the best (and cutest arcdae conversions of the year tht should not be missed.

★ ACE RATED 934

RVF

Microstyle, ST £24.99, Amiga £29.99

RVF offers a near endless

supply of fast paced bike action as you race your Honda RVF. Attention to detail is paid out all along the route with your rider giving the bike a push start after a crash. An excellent mix of arcade and simulation.
★ ACE RATED 915

SPIDER TRONIC

Ere International ● Atari ST £19.95dk

Guide your spider-like character around the game area, collecting coloured panels in the correct order. The built-in construction set means you'll be knocking out your own levels till the cows come home.
★ ACE RATED 903

SUMMER GAMES

Epyx/US Gold ● C64 £9.95 cs £14.95dk ● IBM PC £29.95dk

Epyx sporting simulations are of high quality but none have quite captured the playability and style of the original *Summer Games* and its immediate successor, *Summer Games 2*. One to six players can take part in high jump, gymnastics, springboard diving, clay pigeon shooting, swimming, pole vault – and others – with lovely large graphics and smooth animation throughout. Control of your athlete can be complex so practice is recommended.
★ ACE CLASSIC

SUPER SPRINT

Electric Dreams ● C64 £9.99cs £14.99dk Amstrad £9.99cs Spectrum £9.99cs ● Atari ST £19.99dk

One of the better coin-op conversions currently available. With up to three players all competing at once, the action is fast and furious and. It will take a finely-tuned car to complete some of the more tortuous circuits that appear later in the game.
★ ACE RATED 907

THRUST

Firebird ● Spectrum £1.99cs ● C64 £1.99cs ● Amstrad £1.99cs

Terrifyingly sensitive controls and a large helping of real-life physics make this budget title an absolute must. Flying down through the caverns of an enemy-held planet, you have to pick up fuel and destroy hostile gun turrets without crashing into the tunnel walls. Tough enough as it is, but then you've got to make the return journey with a heavy load slung under your craft. Very mean, very addictive.
★ ACE CLASSIC

URIDIUM

Hewson ● Spectrum £8.95cs ● C64 £9.95cs £12.95dk ● BBC £9.95cs £14.95dk

The piece de resistance of scrolling shoot-em-ups: blast the dreadnought and attacking ships while dodging around any large structures. Great metallic-looking dreadnoughts and the smoothest scrolling you'll ever see put this head and shoulders above the opposition. A game not to be missed, especially now that C64 versions come packaged with the excellent *Paradroid*.
ACE CLASSIC

ZARCH / VIRUS

Superior Software ● Archimedes £19.95dk ● Firebird (16 and 8-bit versions) Amiga £19.95dk ● Atari ST £19.95dk ● Some 8-bit versions under development

Still ACE'S highest rated game to date. A solid three dimensional shoot-em-up with such graphic perfection and timelessly addictive gameplay that it became an instant classic. Now the 16-bit versions have arrived and they're just as good as the 32-bit versions . All that remains to be seen now is whether we'll be ACE rating the 8-bit versions.
★ ACE RATED 981

ADVENTURES

Adventures have come a long way since *The Hobbit*.. State-of-the-art graphics and powerful parsers enable you to communicate with other characters, and fully explore the world of your choosing.

BEYOND ZORK

Infocom/Activision ● C64 £19.99dk ● PC £24.99dk ● Amiga £24.99dk ● Atari ST £24.99dk

Infocom's attempt to muscle in on the role-playing market is a great success. Locate the fabulous Coconut of Quendor in a game that combines the wit and ingenuity of one of the world's most original software companies with state-of-the-art parsing and gameplay. Text-only, but with an on-screen mapping facility.
★ ACE RATED 902

CORRUPTION

Rainbird ● Atari ST £24.95dk ● Amiga £24.95dk ● PC £24.95dk ● Spectrum £15.95dk ● C64 £17.95dk ● Amstrad 6128 £19.95dk

This tale of insider dealings, infidelity and crooked business deals is unlikely to appeal to adventurers who prefer to wander through vast dungeon networks seeking treasure. But for those who are fed up with traditional adventuring, it's like a breath of fresh air. Superb graphics, great atmosphere and a nail-biting plot makes this a terrific game that grips from the start.
★ ACE RATED 920

FISH

Magnetic Scrolls ● PC £24.99dk Amiga £24.99dk

More gameplay than *Corruption*, better game design than *Jinxter*, and not as quirky as *The Pawn*. This is definitely MS's best release since *Guild Of Thieves*. Good stuff indeed.
★ ACE RATED

GUILD OF THIEVES

Rainbird ● C64 £19.95dk ● Spectrum £15.95dk ● Amstrad 6128 £19.95dk ● Amiga £24.95dk ● Atari ST £24.95dk ● PC £24.95dk

One of Britain's newer adventure software houses – Magnetic Scrolls – managed to produce a traditional treasure hunt with superb graphics and some very tricky puzzles. Powerful parser helps to create a convincing game world with humour and imagination.
★ ACE CLASSIC

INGRID'S BACK

Level 9 ● Atari ST £19.95dk

A great follow-up to *Gnome Ranger*. Level 9 have really got to grips with the use of characters in their games and how to program them very effectively.
★ ACE RATED 920

JEWELS OF DARKNESS

Rainbird ● C64 £14.95cs ● Spectrum 128 £14.95cs ● Amstrad £14.95cs £19.95dk ● PC £19.95dk ● Amiga £19.95dk ● Atari ST £19.95dk

Level 9 have put together three of their classic releases, *Colossal Adventure*, *Dungeon Adventure* and *Adventure Quest* in one bundle. The games have been updated with graphics and larger vocabularies and are as close to the original spirit of adventuring as you're likely to find.
★ ACE CLASSIC

LURKING HORROR

Infocom/Mediagenic ● C64 £19.99dk ● ST £24.99 I Amiga £24.99 ● PC £24.99

Infocom's tribute to H.P. Lovecraft and the horror-fantasy genre sends you into a cold sweat as you discover something very nasty lurking beneath your college laboratory. Superb text-only game that defies you to play it after dark...
★ ACE CLASSIC

TIME AND MAGIK

Mandarin ● Spectrum £14.95cs £14.95dk ● C64 £14.95cs £14.95dk ● Amstrad £14.95cs £14.95dk ● Atari ST £19.99dk ● Amiga £19.99dk ● PC £19.99dk

This compilation of the Level 9 games, *Lords Of Time*, *Red Moon* and *The Price Of Magik* have been re-vamped with better parsing, bigger vocabularies and pictures added. Superb value if you don't already own them.
★ ACE RATED 919

ZORK ZERO

Infocom Versions due out about now. Watch this space for price info. Highly enjoyable with a variety of challenges that make for instant addiction. A bit more character interaction would have made this a real humdinger, but even so it remains one of the best games of the year so far.
★ ACE RATED

PUZZLES

If you're after a game that will provide you with a real challenge, without necesarily requiring a large dose of strategic thinking, then it's a puzzle game you want..

BONE CRUNCHER

Superior Software ● C64 £9.95cs11.95dk ● Amiga £14.95

At first sight this recent release may appear to be nothing more than a boulderdahs ripoff. However there are a number of innovative gameplay features which give Bonecruncher a feel all of its own. Highly recommended for those who prefer to solve problems rather than shoot them.
★ ACE RATED 948 – AMIGA

BOULDER DASH

Prism Leisure Corporation ● Spectrum £2.99cs ● C64 £2.99cs ● Amstrad £2.99cs

A game that has everything – instant addiction, lng-term challenge, frenetic excitement as the clock ticks down and extremely tricky puzzles. You must collect jewels hidden in caverns, digging away earth and boulders to get tat them. Boulders can drop and cause you srious damage, while the jewels are often hidden by seemingly impenetrable walls. Complex but great fun. Boulderdash is a clasic you can't afford to miss in its budget incarnation.
★ ACE CLASSIC

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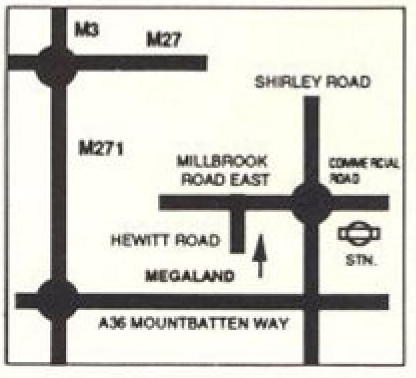

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Optics are the order of the day here (not the spirit dispensers) as the player tries to connect a laser beam to a receiver and at the same time destroy a number of cells that are on screen as well. You'll need to make full use of the mirrors, fibre-optic conduits and polarising and refracting blocks if you're to ahcieve your aim. Clear the first screen and you'll only have 59 more to do. Fascinating.

★ ACE RATED 906 – ST

NEBULUS

Hewson ● C64 £9.99cs £14.99 dk● Atari ST £14.99 dk

Guide pogo to the top of eight towers using the spiral of platforms, lifts and ledges that form the route. It's a highly original game that strikes a fine balance between frustration and addiction, added to which is the rotary scroll, thus making it a good-looking, playable winner of a game.

★ ACE RATED 943 - C64

SENTINEL

Firebird ● Spectrum £9.95 cs ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95 dk ● Atari ST £19.95dk ● Amiga £19.99dk

Bizarre and compelling strategy game played over the chequered surface of a planet dominated by the Sentinel. Fundamentally you have to absorb energy while trying to stop the Sentinel from absorbing yours. A clean brain and fast trigger finger are both necessary in this very original and large - 10,000 possible landscapes - game.

★ ACE RATED 963 - AMIGA

SKULLDIGGERY

Nexus● Atari ST £19.95

Boulderdash clone that completely outdoes the original on this particular machine. Again (see Boulderdash above) you're digging for diamonds in caverns over a hundred different screens - with a time limit for each screen. Skulldiggery scores on playability (easier screens to begin with and a choice of starting point) and its entertaining two-player option.

★ ACE RATED 919 - ST

SPORE

Bulldog ● C64 £1.99cs ● Amstrad £1.99cs ● Spectrum £1.99cs

The winning combination of stragtegy, frenzied blasting and great graphics make Spore a worthy full-priced release - what a bargain then to be able to pick it up for £1.99!

★ ACE RATED 919 - C64

TETRIS

Mirrorsoft ● Spectrum £8.99 cs ● C64 £8.99cs £12.99dk ● Amstrad £8.99cs £12.99 dk ● Atari ST £19.95dk ● Amiga £19.99dk ● IBM PC £19.99dk

A fascinating geometrical oddity, this Russian puzzler turns the obscure mathematical topic of packing into a cult game. One at a time, shapes fall downwards into a rectangular playing area. Left to their own devices they'll pile up until they reach the top of the screen; your task is to guide them down and pack them tightly so that doesn't happen. Different versions have proved to be rather variable in their arcade aspects, but the brilliantly simple idea behind them means they're well worth a look whatever your machine.

★ ACE RATED 959 - C64

THINK!

Firebird ● C64 £1.99cs ● Amstrad £1.99cs ● Spectrum £1.99cs

Originally released by Ariolasoft at full price, but now available for a fraction of that from Firebird. A horribly addictive game played on a 6x6 grid - by one or two players - in which you attempt to connect four counters, horizontally, vertically or diagonally.

★ ACE CLASSIC

XOR

Logotron ● BBC £9.95cs £12.85dk ● Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95dk● Spectrum £7.95cs

Very tricky maze game involving the player controlling two shields, and collecting masks through 15 mazes, which increase in complexity as you progree. Also in later stages, fish and chickens lie in wait, often blocking the masks and just waiting to fall on you and bring your quest to a premature end. Later still, the fish and chickens are the least of your worries as bombs, transporters and dolls crop up to conspire against you. This one requires real planning.

★ ACE RATED 963

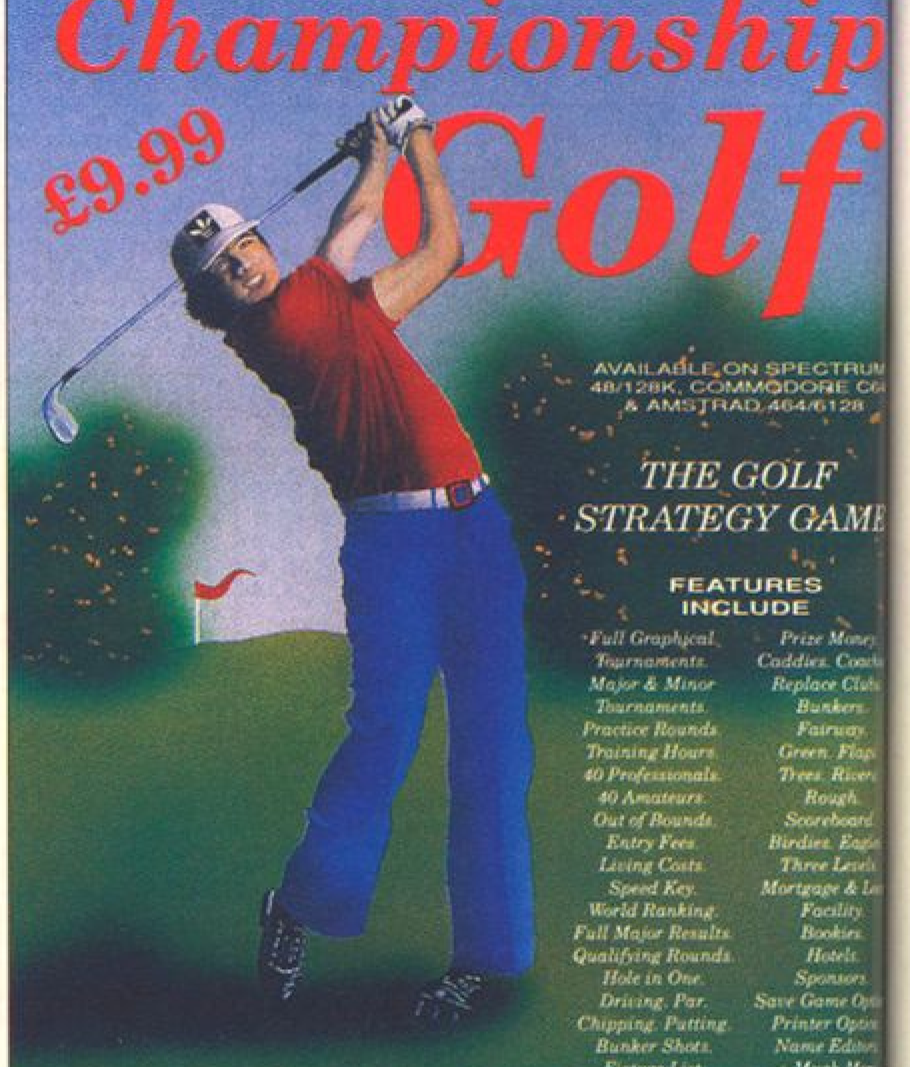
SPECIALS

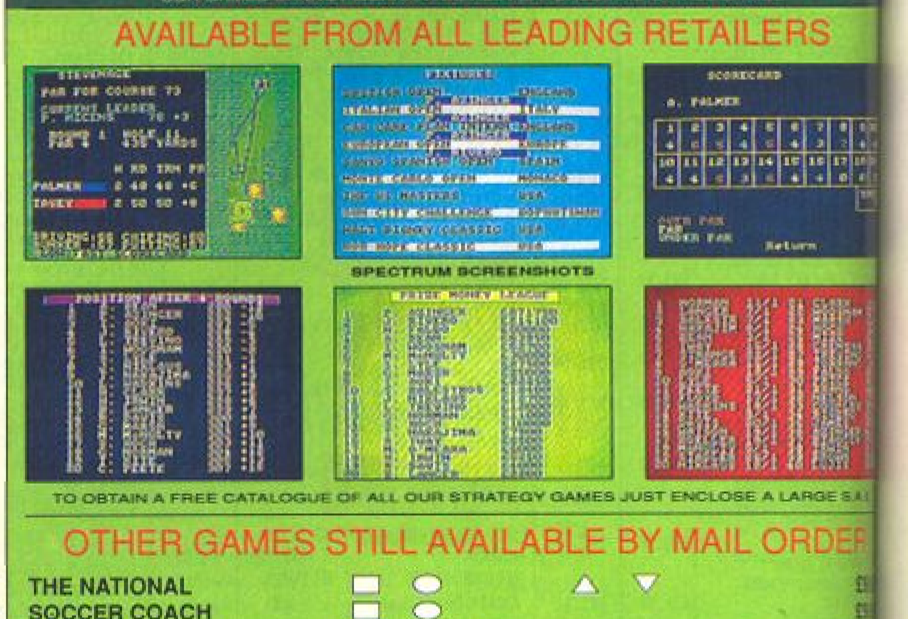
The weird, the wacky, the wonderful, the simply unclassifiable – they're all here. from These games are well worth looking at, simply because it's here you're likely to find programs with heaps of originality.

ATF

Digital Intergration ● C64 £8.95cs £12.95dk ● Amstrad £8.95cs £12.95dk● Spectrum £8.95cs £13.95dk

Excellent combat/flight simulator that's a bit of a change for Digital Intergration, the simulation specialist. The emphasis is on solid action, the result





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being a sure-fire hit.
★ ACE RATED 956 - SPECTRUM

DARK SIDE
Incentive ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95dk● Spectrum £9.95cs £14.95dk

The second game using the Freescape programming system, which sets more of an arcade challenge. The 3-D graphics are again superb as are the tasks and puzzles.
★ ACE RATED 915 - AMSTRAD

ELITE
Firebird ● C64 £14.95cs £17.95dk ● Amstrad £12.95cs £14.95dk● Spectrum £14.95cs ● BBC £13.95cs £14.95dk (available from Superior software)

Still the best space trading game, Elite set a standard for other companies to follow. One of the first space games to use vector graphics, it's a shooting and trading effort set across several galaxies, with plenty of variety to the game play. You can trade legal goods in (relatively) safe systems, or run the gauntlet of pirates in the galaxies' danger spots with your hold full of contraband. Either way there's a nice line in zero-G dogfighting, and as big a task as you'll find anywhere.
★ ACE CLASSIC

INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SHPERE

Electric Dreams ● C64 £8.99cs £14.99dk ● Amstrad £9.99cs £14.99dk ● Spectrum £9.99cs £14.99dk ● Atari ST £19.99dk ● Amiga £24.99dk

A manic maze world where mass, size and inertia combine to provide wicked gameplay. Tricky puzzles and endless nasty obstacles will have you rolling around in delight.
★ ACE RATED 923 - C64

MAGNATRON
Firebird ● C64 £8.95cs £12.95dk ● Spectrum £8.95cs £12.95dk

Puzzles and action Steve Turner style. Save the world by dismantling eight satellites. Steal parts from enemy droids to upgrade your own droid and hopefully make your job a little easier.
★ ACE RATED 904 - SPECTRUM

QUEDEX
Thalamus ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk

In this impressively challenging game you must steer a metallic ball through ten different screens of mazes, bonuses and obstacles, all within a set time limit. This simple game concept has a host of added features to make it particularly pleasing: you can carry over unused time to the next screen, for example, and tackle the different screens or 'planes' in any order you wish. Excellent graphics and utterly absorbing play.
★ ACE RATED 934 - C64

SPINDIZZY
Electric Dreams ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Spectrum £9.95cs ● Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95 Disk

Tremendous stuff; steer your spinning top over tough obstacles and collect jewels, against a fiendish time limit. The game landscape is a vast system of catwalks, ramps, towers and trmapolines surrounded by lethel drops - and NO safety rails. Floor switches activiate lifts and bridge gspd, but tripping them in the right order can be harder than it looks. A few bad guys and a lot of nice touches, but the explorations the thing.
★ ACE CLASSIC

STARGLIDER II
Rainbird ● Atari ST £24.95dk ● Amiga £24.99dk

One of the finest examples of a game using vector graphics to their full advantage, gets the solid 3D treatment and comes out looking every bit a winner. You've got a large taske to complete and there's plenty of Egron's to destroy, making this combination of blasting and exploration that stands head above the competition.
★ ACE RATED 927 - ST

TAU CETI/ ACADEMY
CRL ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Spectrum £9.95cs ● Atari ST £19.99dk ● Amiga £19.95

Flight simulator/shoot 'em up and its sequel which are both incredibly smooth and well put together. The attention to detail is imppeccable as you set off on hair-raising missions as a space cadet. In Academy you get to design your own space skimmer craft as well.
★ ACE CLASSIC

TOTAL ECLIPSE
Incentive ● C64 £9.95cs £12.95dk ● Amstrad £9.95cs £12.95dk ● Spectrum £9.95cs £14.95dk

The third game using the Freescape system is a bit of a departure from the first two, but it's still an incredible game. In total eclipse you're battling against time back in the 1930's trying to prevent the moon exploding. For arcade adventurers who love puzzles, the Freescape system is a godsend.
★ ACE RATED 907 - AMSTRAD

WIZBALL
OCEAN ● C64 £8.95cs £14.95dk ● Amstrad £8.95cs $12.95dk ● Spectrum £8.95cs £14.95dk

A compelling and original ball game in which you become Wizball and must set out to conquer the 'colour creatures' which are intent on eliminating the spectrum and rendering the landscape grey and drab. Controlling the Wizball is great fun and makes this one of the most playable games to have appeared for a long time.

RPG

Enter the world of fantasy Role Playing Games with this lot – the best of the RPG bunch. but be prepared to play for a long time; thse games are addictive..

THE BARD'S TALE II
Electronic Arts, C64 £16.95, Amiga £24.95dk

The highly succesful predecessor to Bards Tale III. BT II has the abvantage of being slightly easier to advance. THe Amiga version features some very nice sampled monk chants when you enter a temple and excellently coloured graphice. And of course, you can update your favourite characters, their attributes and equipment for use in BT III.
★ ACE RATED 920

THE BARD'S TALE III
Electronic Arts ● C64 £14.95dk

The latest *Bard's Tale* game offers a number of refinements over its predecessors (all of which are still well worth taking a good look at). First, the graphics are better animated. Second, there are ranged combat routines which take careful account of the distance between you and your opponents. Finally, the game's large and represents excellent value for money.
★ ACE RATED 920

BATTLETECH
Infocom, PC £29.95, ST

Battletech features some incredable cartoon sequences, arcade style action, role play and strategy. In short a complete, full game. A brilliant RPG purchase even though it missed out on an Ace rating.
★ ACE RATED 801

DUNGEON MASTER
Electronic Arts ● C64 £14.95dk

Quoted as being a "milestone in Advanced Computer Entertainment", Dungeon Master offers 14 levels, loads of spells, atmospheric graphics and sound. All going to make Dungeon Master one of the best roleplaying adventures to have appeared on any machine.
★ ACE RATED 949

POOL OF RADIANCE
US GOLD /SSI
● C64 £14.99dk

SSI were very brave to attempt tocapture the complex concept of the AD&D system on a computer, but they managed superbly. An RPG-influenced game that will appeal to not only AD&D fans but to anyone looking for an enthralling game that will keep them playing for months.
★ ACE RATED 921

ULTIMA V
OriginSystems/Microprose ● C64 £24.95dk ● PC £29.95 ● ST/Amiga to be announced

Astonishing level of detail in thie role-playing inlfuenced epic. Travel round Britannia trashing the opposition and learning the magical, tactical, and geaogrphical secrets that will enable you to defeat the forces of evil far underground. Superb romp, great lasting interest, and tough challenges galore.
★ ACE RATED 928

WASTELAND
Electronic Arts ● C64 £14.95dk

Charge around irradiated USA whopping mutant bunnies and biker scum in this role-playing epic. The atmosphere may not be as good as the *Bard's Tale* series of games, but the extra dimensionof strategy leaves the cut, slash and spell scenario of the *BT* series way behind.
★ ACE RATED 921

BRAIN GAMES

When you want some real stimulation, you rach for the games that really make you think: here's the best of the bunch

CHESS MASTER 2000
Electronic Arts ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Amiga £24.95dk ● Atari ST £24.95dk ● IBM PC £24.95dk

Strongest chess game on the Amiga, with excellent graphics, 2D or 3D viewpoint, 12 levels of difficulty and all the playing options you could wish for. Plus some fairly nifty speech synthesis.
★ ACE CLASSIC

COLOSSUS CHESS 4
CDS ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95dk● Spectrum £9.95

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Graphically the best of all contract bridge simulations, with large playing cards depicted against a suitably green baize background. Plays a good game (for a computer, which after all is a bit short in the imangination and flair department), and features a wide range of options and bidding conventions which you can toggle of according to your style.

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If you want totry out your general knowledge, we reckon you'd be better off with this original and challenging combination of strategy game and quiz than with the admittedly monster selling Trivial Pursuits. Powerplay is graphically very pretty in its setting on Mount Olympus, home of the Gods.

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Mirrorsoft, ST 24.99, Amiga £24.99, PC TBA

The 16 bit progression of Theatre Europe. Conflict Europe featured lots of extra graphical and sound effects. The computer controlled intelligence was marginally sophisticated but still enough to give a challenging game. The correct balance between strategy and exitement throughout. Great for beginners and intermediate players.

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THEATRE EUROPE

PSS, Spectrum £9.95cs, C64 £0.95cs £14.95dk, Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95dk

The perfect game for 8 bit owners who go green with envy when they look at Conflict Europe. Theatre Europe is the forerunner to the excellent 16 bit game. The graphics and overall play are not as sophisticated, but it's still one heck of a game.

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Yessiree!, With an Ace Rating of way over 800, Rainbow Arts' latest game *Oil Imperium* has rightly received a great deal of fantastic praise! (says our reporter Simon Harvey). Now we've been offered a pair of gen-u-ine shiny black leather Texan boots to give away to the winning would-be oil baron in this fabulous Rainbow Arts/ACE competition.

Oil Imperium is a game which pictches you against four other ruthless oil men as you attempt to control the largest slice of the world's supply of black gold – putting the others out of business by fari means or foul. There's also a generous helping of arcade action as you drill, lay pipelines and indulge in some heavy counter-espionage.

THE COMPETITION

So, to win the boots, and get one step nearer to total domination of the oil world, simply answer the following questions.

1. How much money is each player allotted at the beginning of the game?

2. What character does Larry Hagman play in *Dallas*?

3. Which of the following is not an oil company?
BP., EMAP, Exxon.

And DON'T FORGET TO INCLUDE YOUR SHOE SIZE! Send your answers on a postcard to

RAINBOW ARTS SHINY LEATHER COMPETITION,. ACE, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon lane, LONDON EC1R 3AU. Entries to reach us by 10th October.

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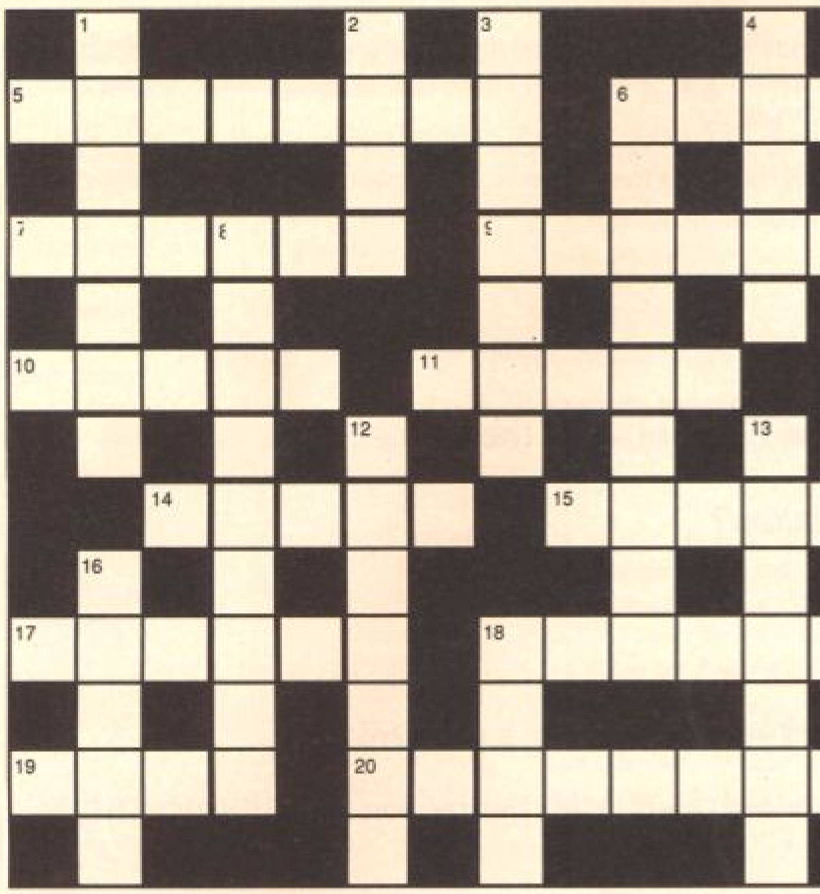

The ACE Crossword is cryptic. The answer may be an anagram, or formed from the end of one word and the beginning of another, or simply hinted at in the clue. Most, but not quite all, of the answers are computer related.

ACROSS

5. Game played by Rod and I in Bono's house (8)
6. Basic instructions, perhaps (4)
7. Person striking Joker's enemy in game (6)
9. A few bits – sounds like a byte! (6)
10. Intends to change names (5)
11. Wired up in a strange way (5)
14. CIA is cracking the code (5)
15. Nonsense about old boy being an android (5)
17. The French Female caught in senile game (6)
18. Doctor gets a satellite receiver – it's fashionable (6)
19. One with branches in every street (4)
20. Rex notes characters for a game (8)

DOWN

1. Ocean traveller's game (7)
2. Indication that top game's in the wrong (4)
3. One is about to go ahead with game (7)
4. Solid state of stars (5)
6. Unusually nice boy Dr. Hewson produces (9)
8. Mental picture of a software house (9)
12. Traipse around for a computer game (7)
13. Addictive game for a marksman (7)
16. Rolls Royce layabout lounge lizard appears with (5)
18. Team playing friend (4)

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ACE DIARY

1st September – St Crackle's day, Patron Saint of Rice Crispies

Phew, what a month you lot have ahead of you. Just get a load of the software being released this month: From Psygnosis there's Ballistix on the C64 and PC, Triad II on ST and Amiga, Stryx on ST and Amiga, Never Mind on ST, Amiga and PC and Shadow Of The Beast on the Amiga. From Rainprose and Microbird, there's F-19 Stealth Fighter on Spectrum, Tank on PC, Red Storm Rising on PC, Rainbow Warrior on all formats, Mr Heli on all formats, Quartz on ST and Amiga, Rainbow Islands all formats, P-47 all formats, Carrier Command C64, Amstrad CPC and PC, Starglider II PC, Weird Dreams PC, C64 and Amstrad and Stunt Car on the Spectrum, ST and 64. Cor, what a scorcher!

5th September – ACE October issue on sale

Packed with exciting features, reviews and more colour than a baboon's behind, and as usual, a whole month ahead of itself!

11th September – Release of Batman

Lucky Spectrum and C64 owner finally get their hands on their very own digital representation of Michael Keaton in Ocean's biggie, Batman the movie. Sorry, but everyone else will just have to wait.

16th September – H.D.T.V. Exhibition

Want to get a sneak preview of the vision technology of the future, then pop along to the London Ryan Hotel and take a glimpse at the new High Definition Television. Apparently, watching a recording of a goldfish bowl on HDTV is exactly like watching a real goldfish. Incredible.

23rd September – UK Electronica

The premier music electronics show this month. The place: Logon Hall. The time, 1.00 PM. Expect loads of guest appearances from artistes who have discovered the wonder of STs. For more details, call Mark Jenkins on (01) 885 5665.

25th September – A National Hero is born

A day of great rejoicing for all, especially those in the vicinity of Farringdon. Steve Cooke celebrates 30+ years of pleasant existence. Many happy returns boss, and so say all of us! (Well, all except Pete Connor, because we didn't actually tell him. If you knew him, you'd understand why!)

27th September – PC Show opening day!

The gates open! The crowds roar! The stars roll up in limousines! At last the PC Show has started! Sadly, most of you won't be able to get in just yet, as the first three days are trade only, and even if you are trade, you've still got to be over 18, so nyer!

27th September – Batman Amiga and PC swoops in!

In a dazzling presentation, the likes of which has never been seen before, Ocean release the Amiga version of Batman. Oh god, will Batmania never die?

30th September – PC Show goes public!

Quick, now's your chance! You can get in now, so don't delay. Pop along to Earls Court and see all the latest games and hardware, including your first chance to see the KONIX Multisystem!!! Plus you also get to meet the ACE crew, but who wants to meet Pete Connor?

1st October – Time to look forward to more software

Lots more releases this month, including among others Xenophobe on all formats, UMS II on ST, Amiga and PC, Stunt Car Racer on the Amiga, Blood Money on 64, Infestation ST/Amiga and Matrix Marauders on ST, Amiga and PC. Busy busy busy!

3rd October - 8th October – Olympia Decorative and Antique Fair

Here's something fun and educational for you to do if you've nothing else on. It's all happening at Earl's Court and looks like it's going to be quite a ball with all sorts of surprise guests, an army judo demonstration and lots of lovely grandfather clocks.

5th October – ACE November issue smashes into the shops.

Early as usual, the new ACE is quite positively the best one we've done this month. Loads of reviews of all the top games and a feature on CDI, what more could you want?

6nd October -13th October – Not a lot!

Well, what a pretty dull month October is. Not a lot happening at all. Ho hum. Well, at least Pete Connors isn't in.

14th October – Batman on the ST

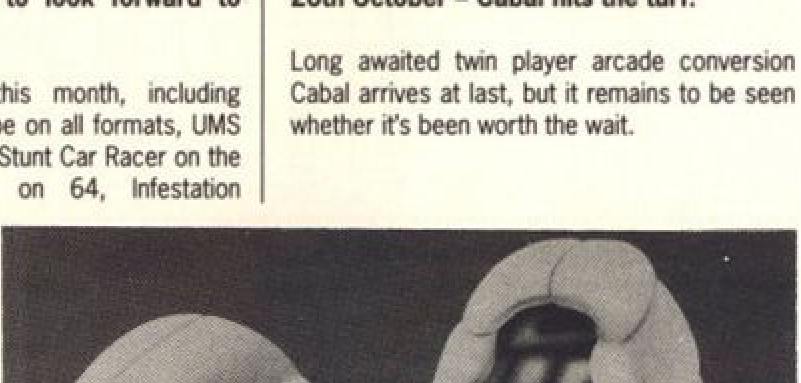
Yes, it's the caped crusader again. To tell you the truth, I'm getting a bit fed up of him.

20th October - 29th October – The British Motor Fair

Drive along to Earls Court Exhibition Centre and stand for nine days and drool continuously over the plethora of new and wonderful cars, all costing the earth and guaranteed to get pranged within a fortnight of purchase.

20th October – Cabal hits the turf.

Long awaited twin player arcade conversion Cabal arrives at last, but it remains to be seen whether it's been worth the wait.



The konix will be launched this month at the PC show – but don't expect to sit on the famous Konix hydraulic chair until Christmas. Santa's gonna have a bit of trouble getting these down the chimneys.

BEAST FEAST!

Psygnosis have come up with a game that really squeezes every last ounce out of the Amiga. Grab a pen and you could get your paws on one of TEN free copies or TWENTY free Roger Dean T-shirts...

885-rated *Beast* (see pages 70/71) has to be seen to be believed. Even ACE reviewer Tony Dillon, who's seen some sexy software in his time, returned from his visit to Liverpool almost speechless. 'What they've done with the machine is extraordinary,' he said – and judging by our own glimpses of the game, we have to agree. The parallax scrolling is unlike any you've seen before, featuring far more levels and infinitely better use of colour. Sprites are exquisitely drawn and range in size from the big...to the enormous. The soundtrack is stunning (featuring more sound data than on the *Afterburner* and *R-Type* arcade machines put together) and the action is fast and furious. And to cap it all, you don't just get the game, you get a Roger Dean T-shirt at the same time.

So what's the deal then? Well, Psygnosis have given us ten copies hot off the duplicators' deck, together with twenty genuine Roger Dean T-shirts, designed exclusively for Psygnosis by the great penman himself. And all you have to do is this...

THE COMPETITION

Simply answer the following questions...easy, isn't it?!

1. Which company programmed the first ST game – released in the States and then in the UK?

2. In which city are Psygnosis based?

3. Which of the following is not a Psygnosis game?
***Barbarian II, Barbarian, Captain Fizz and the Blastatrons*?**

Send your answers on a postcard to
BEAST FEAST,. ACE, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon lane, LONDON EC1R 3AU. Entries to reach us by 10th October.

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AAARGH	—	14.95
Action Fighter	16.95	16.95
African Raiders	14.95	14.95
Afterburner	17.95	14.95
Airbourne Ranger	16.95	16.95
Alien Legion	16.95	—
Altered Beast	17.95	14.95
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Astaroth	17.95	17.95
Baal	14.95	14.95
Balance of Power (1990)	16.95	16.95
Ballistix	14.95	14.95
Barbarian 2	17.95	17.95
Bards Tale 2	17.95	—
Bards Tale	7.25	7.25
Basketball	17.95	—
Batman	16.95	16.95
Battlechess	17.95	17.95
Battlehawks 1942	17.95	17.95
Battletech	17.95	17.95
Beach Volley	17.95	14.95
Beam	17.95	14.95
Beast	16.95	16.95
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Blood Money	16.95	16.95
Bloodwych	17.95	17.95
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Captain Blood	16.95	16.95
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Carrier Command	16.95	16.95
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Chariots of Wrath	16.95	16.95
Chessmaster 2000	17.95	17.95
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Dungeon Master Editor	7.99	7.99
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Batman	6.99	10.50	6.99	10.50
Beach Volley	7.25	10.85	7.25	10.85
Bloodwych	7.25	10.85	7.25	10.85
Carrier Command	10.50	11.20	6.99	10.85
Carriers at War	—	—	—	16.95
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Microprose Soccer	6.99	10.50	6.99	10.50
Mr Heli	6.99	10.50	6.99	10.50
New Zealand Story	7.25	10.85	7.25	10.85
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COMPILATIONS COMPILED AND RATED.

As the winter settles in software houses start dusting down their old titles to extract a few bob more out of them by putting them on compilations. Here are the main ones to watch out for.

The Story So Far Volume 3.

Elite.

ATARI ST	£19.99	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£19.99	OUT NOW

Bombjack, Space Harrier, Thundercats, and Live and Let Die.

ACE Rating. 815.

Premiere Collection 2.

Hewson.

ATARI ST	£29.99	SEPTEMBER
AMIGA	£29.99	SEPTEMBER

Eliminator, Custodian, Mercenary, and Backlash.

ACE Rating. 875

Dark Force.

Ocean.

AMSTRAD	£12.99cs	£17.99dk	SEPTEMBER
SPECTRUM	£12.99cs	£17.99dk	SEPTEMBER
C64/128	£12.99cs	£17.99dk	SEPTEMBER

Batman - The Caped Crusader, R-Type, Last Ninja II, Dark Side.

ACE Rating 930.

Light Force,

Ocean.

ATARI ST	£24.99dk	SEPTEMBER
AMIGA	£24.99dk	SEPTEMBER

IK+, R-Type, Batman - The Caped Crusader, Voyager.

ACE Rating 940.

Winners,

U S Gold.

AMSTRAD	£12.99cs	£14.99dk	SEPTEMBER
SPECTRUM	£12.99cs	£14.99dk	SEPTEMBER
C64/128	£12.99cs	£14.99dk	SEPTEMBER
ATARI ST	£29.99 dk		SEPTEMBER
AMIGA	£29.99 dk		SEPTEMBER

*Blasteroids, Thunderblade, LED Strorm, Indiana Jones - Temple of Doom *, Impossible Mission*

* Not on 16bit versions..

ACE Rating 820.

Giants,

US Gold.

AMIGA	£29.99	SEPTEMBER

Outrun, 1943, Street Fighter, Gauntlet.

ACE Rating 810.

Triad II.

Psygnosis.

ATARI ST	£24.95	SEPTEMBER
AMIGA	£24.95	SEPTEMBER
IBM PC	£24.95	DECEMBER

Baal, Menace, Tetris.

DIGITAL PASSION...

This gripping serial, begun in Issue 23, has had to be held over for legal reasons. We are consulting with our solicitors with regard to the alleged offence caused to Mrs Norberta Finch-Bestard by allegations concerning her relationship with certain kitchen utensils. The facts, and nothing but the facts, will appear in next month's issue.

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Charriots of Wrath	Phone	Phone
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Dark Side*	Phone	Phone
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Dragons Lair	–	29.99
Dragon Ninja	13.64	16.79
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IK+	13.64	16.79
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Jaws	Phone	Phone
Kick off	13.64	13.64
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The Kristal	19.95	19.95
Kult	16.79	16.79
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COMPUTER HARDWARE

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£284.95
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A500 Base Pack
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1 Meg drive, 520k, Cables etc.

A500 Shack Pack
£409.95
As Base Pack but with Games and Joystick.

A500 Blast Pack
£620.95
As Shack Pack but with 1 Meg Memory, 2X 1Meg Drives
and a Super Games Pack.

Disk Drives
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ACE PRIZE PUZZLE 18

Set by Archie Medes

ADDING ACE

In an alphamatic puzzle, letters are printed in place of the original digits and the problem requires you to re-substitute the numbers and find out what the sum is.

For example, what three-digit number is represented by ACE in this simple addition?

ACE	251
ACE	251
ACE	251
ACE	251
ACE	251
EACC	1255

The solution is shown on the right – that is, A=2, C=5, and E=1.
This month's problem is in two parts:

1) ACE		ACE	
ACE		ACE	
....		....	
....	↕ 18 ACE'S	....	↕ ? ACE's
....		....	
ACE		ACE	
ACE		ACE	
EACC		EACC	

The first problem is to increase the number of ACE's to be added to 18. This still results in a solution represented by the letters EACC. Having done this, increase the number of ACE's still further and try to find yet another solution which results in EACC.

As with all puzzles of this type the same letter stands for the same digit wherever it occurs – different letters represent different digits. Of course, each of the two different problems will require a different substitution....

Don't forget – next month features a whole new puzzle section. Check out next month for a backlong of pusszle

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Computer owned.............................Age........

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THE ACE SERIAL

The Death of N'Garr..?

N'Garr Thrombobo was the world's first totally artificial electronic intelligence. He also looked like being its last. From his humble beginnings as a Centauran Battledrone in Return of the Mutant Hitlers from Mars, he had struggled against his human creators – who then became his tormentors.

His was the most powerful intelligence in the known universe, and yet against the colossal, unyielding and insensate stupidity of the human race he was apparently impotent. He had been stamped on, incinerated, bombarded in a particle accelerator till his neutrons boiled, and even flung himself back from the non-existent limbo of non-space as a small piece of anthracite to confront his mortal enemies – those ghastly, slithering, flaccid heaps of protoplasm called The Human Race.

The Grimleythorpsedale Insurrection Party was composed of members of The Human Race, albeit ones even more ghastly, slithering and flaccid than usual. It formed a major local political force. To such a degree that it controlled the local council by a sizable majority, and thus had ample funds for the purchase of guns, ammunition, explosives, casual yet attractive combat wear, soft leather jackboots and matching accessories. But given that such items were generally in rather short supply in Grimleythorpsedale, GIT was left with large amounts of money left unspent at the end of each financial year. Money which had to be spent to ensure the same allowance next year. Hence the last-minute purchases of such items as Mussey Furgatroyd air-conditioned, cruise-controlled dustbin lorries, Acme Superdeluxe Roadsweeper Turbos and – crucially for that small part of N'Garr Thrombobo still existing within the molecular structure of a mis-shapen little lump of anthracite – a McDonnell Douglas D-16 drive-by-wire mechanical earthmover.

At the very instant that the piece of anthracite was about to be crushed to smithereens, Thrombobo ported himself through the metal links of the tracks, down the leading axle, up through the transmission housing and into the D-16's central processor.

What power! Thrombobo sent the digger careering around the site of the explosion (caused by the gravitational wormhole and a subsequent neo-temporal paradox), and the driver flying from the cab. Revving up the twin turbo-diesels, Thrombobo then span the digger round and aimed it at the nearest visible site of human infestation – the main hospital buildings. Notching the vehicle into first, he revved the engine to its maximum, then dumped the clutch.

The machine's tracks dug deep into the soft ground and then the digger was lurching forwards, shovel still held aloft. As the vehicle accelerated, the shovel waved drunkenly up and down, spilling earth and bits of rubble over its sides as it did so. It did not spill, however, a small fragment of floppy disk just sticking out of the rubble.

"Splurrrgghh...!" went the matron as she looked through the window over the shoulder of Mr Saugh, the replacement Head Surgeon. Her cup of tea fell to the floor.

"I say, Matron, do you mind?" he objected, taking off his trifocals and cleaning off the droplets of tea with a portion of rather blood-stained surgical gown. he frowned slightly at the sound of breaking glass and collapsing masonry, and turned to see the digger clawing its way towards him over the rubble that was all that remained of the wall.

"Mr Bludgeon, please don't make such a noise. And what do you want do you want me to take you temperature again for?" he said, inspecting the digger's bucket over the top of his trifocals and taking a thermometer out of his top pocket. "You know you really ought to clean more thoroughleeeuurrglurglurgssspplii-ip...!" he went as he slid underneath the earthmover's tracks.

"Help! Help!" shrieked the matron, grabbing the patients as they pushed to get out of the ward and throwing them over her shoulder, "Help...!"

The sound attracted N'Garr Thrombobo, and he turned the digger towards it. The bucket caught the matron in the posterior just as she got out into the corridor, and she and the bucket dropped to the floor with a thump that caused the hospital's foundations to settle three millimetres. The diggers's tracks span, trying to gain a purchase on the war's polished floor, and the matron huffed and puffed, trying to lift herself out of the bucket.

Then the matron was up. The digger abruptly tipped backwards and the bucket went crashing through the ceiling.

"It's a disgrace!" shrieked the matron, approaching the cab. she climbed in, revved the engine and managed to dislodge the bucket from the ceiling. It came down amidst a shower of plaster, wooden beams and six hundredweight of boiled cabbage being stocked by the hospital kitchen for next month.

N'Garr Thrombobo tried to wrestle the controls away from the woman, but to no avail.

"This must belong to the demolition squad." muttered the matron to herself as she drove the digger through the hole in the wall, "I must have a strong word with them in the moreeeee..." Her voice faded into the distance as N'Garr Thrombobo found the Mc Donnell Doughlas's ejector seat circuits. he turned the digger back, make another hole in the wall and set about systematically annihilating the hospital and its contents.

Unfortunately, his control over the hydraulic circuits was proving strangely lacking. he drove the digger over the pile of boiled cabbage in the corridor and tried moving the bucket up and down. It did't work. He realised then that, somehow, his horribly nice and altogether despised alter-ego – created when his floppy disk was sliced in half – must have found its way via the hydraulic rams, through the constant-velocity trunnion spigot bearings and into one of the CPU's ROM packs. Damn!

Thrombobo sent the digger crashing into the main surgical ward. The bucket was now totally under the control of his other half, and was lifting patients out of harm's way before he could crush them beneath the digger's tracks. Maddened, he smashed through the wall into the geriatrics ward, where the McDonnell douglas's robotic manipulating arms frantically prepared endless cups of tea for terrified old ladies, tidied their pillows and generally made them feel as comfortable as possible considering an eight-ton earthmover was running amok feet from their bedposts.

N'Garr Thrombobo was incensed. Blowing two great billows of smoke from its exhaust stacks, the digger lined up for the doors at the end of the ward started forwards. Glass and wood flew everywhere as the bucket hit them first. Then it hit the wall on the other side of the corridor with a bon-jarring impact that loosened Thrombobo's data in its tracks. Great blocks of masonry fell from the wall and the digger's bucket arm buckled as the tracks clawed at the floor.

Then it surged forward, breaking through into the world outside. Unfortunately, since the hospital was built on a slope, it did so from the first floor. N'Garr Thrombobo could only watch helplessly from the earthmover's ROMs as the vehicles plunged towards the ground below – to its doom.

Was this, at last, The End...?

ACE READERS PAGES THE SPACE WHICH YOU FILL

Buying or selling your computer? Then look no further than the readers pages, all the hardware you need at reasonable prices.
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HELPLINE

Are you cool at coding? Are you good with graphics? Are you mega with music? If the answer is yes to any of the above, write to Simon Cowell, 431 Munit, Flughafen, D 4055, NIEDERKRUCHTEN. W. Germany.

Anyone needing help on E.H.I.S. please phone Edward on: 810469. E.H.I.S. stands for Emlyn Hughes International Soccer. I am excellent at the game. Anyone wishing to come over and play doubles, any sex please call. I am also selling an Acorn Electron for £70.

IBM owner has solutions to Defender of the Crown, King of Chicago, Space Quest I & II, Larry, and more. To swap hints, tips, etc, write to: David Butler, P.O. Box 35771, Menlo Park, Pretoria, 0102, Republic of South Africa. All letters answered!

Has anyone got a solution for Captain Blood? I also need help with Guild of Thieves, I have all the treasures deposited at the bank but need to know exactly what to do to complete the game. All assistance greatfully received. Write to: Steven Laker, 58 Martin Hardie Way, Tonbridge, Kent. TN10 4AE.

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LISTS

The famous ACE lists, according to Richard Parker of Mansfield Road, Sheffield and Eugene Lacey, the man who invented games reviewing in the UK. Got any lists? Course you have - so send 'em in.

Lists, it is worth mentioning, don't have to be funny. They are an in-depth, psycho-social determinator of modern living (© Pretentiorama International Corp 1989).

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EUGENE LACEY'STOP FIVE FAVOURITE GAMES INCLUDING COIN-OPS.

1 ***Scramble.*** 'Power-ups hadn't been invented but I couldn't stop pumping in dosh. Finally clocked in a pub in Dublin'
2 ***Defender***. 'Created by another Eugene. Eugene Jarvid. Fave game of the Apple Macintosh design team. Totally brilliant in every way'
3 ***Pacman***. 'It's moronic, but I still can't walk past one on the few occasions you spot one these days.
4 ***Elite*** 'My diary for Thursday the 11th of February 1988 reads 'Became Elite at 3.21 am. F*@&ng brilliant. Made a Mushroom Cup-a-soup to celebrate'.
5 ***Tetris***. 'Nintendo have wisely converted it for the Game Boy. The Lynx will need something good to best this.'

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The Microprose marketing man officiating at the launch of the Greenpeace game *Rainbow Warrior* was understandably confused. Struggling with the joystick and a pre-release version he consistently failed to rescue the hapless seal who, floundering beneath an ice flow, was clearly getting low on oxygen. 'Oh well,' he said, 'if you get fed up, you can always start clubbing them instead!' Although this remark sparked off an unholy glint in some of the gamesters present, who reckoned that anything on the screen which moved should be shot (or, if it didn't move, shot until it did), it did cause a few of the assembled Greenpeace brethren to choke on their ice-cubes.

But what did they expect? You can understand the poor PR man's problems. If the Rainbow Warrior appeared in any of Microprose's other games, it would be firmly in the centre of your sights as you toggled the AGM-65D Mavericks before popping over to Libya to mop up any remaining life-forms.

When asked why they'd chosen Microprose, Jonathan Smales of Greenpeace replied that it was precisely because of their militaristic software. He saw the Greenpeace game as a chance to convert the most confirmed technocides to the joys of green living and peace on earth. You might as well prance into the den of a hungry lion and toss it a Jordan's Crunchy Bar...

The truth is that Greenpeace didn't really choose Microprose at all. Microprose chose them, since most of the other major players in the industry had already rejected the product. And if you're wondering why anyone should be so stupid as to turn down a cast-iron profit opportunity, don't – despite a ton of good intention, there's only an ounce of gameplay in the entire program that would satisfy anyone over eight years old.

Despite everything, the launch of the game ended on a good note. As the video demonstration came to an end, another punter remarked (in an embarrassingly loud voice) that one part of the game looked just like *Frogger*. At least someone can appreciate a green game...

*

Having trouble with *Super Mario Land* on the Nintendo Gameboy? Of course you are. Our hot tip (courtesy of ad manager Gary Williams) is to head the bricks on the Egyptian level when you see pipes that you can't jump up to. Hey presto...invisible lifts!

*

Wedding bells are in the air and Blitter has been digging the confetti out of his hair since last week when top soft-tycoon Mark Cale (he of the two Ferraris) was wed. Blitter's spies report that he had two strippers at his stag do (obviously likes things in twos, does Mr Cale) and has now whisked his new trouble and strife off on a four week tour of the far east.

Lucky girl. Not only will she be sporting an exotic sun tan on her return but she'll be part of the only couple in Pinner with His 'N Hers Ferraris.

*

More lovey dovey stuff has been going on a bit closer to home where a certain Editor of a 'sister' publication of ours is off on a short trip with his girlfriend. No surprises there, until we got wind of their destination: The Teddy Bears' Fair. Apparently the lady in question has a house full of the furry beasts – most of them bought by this same Editor. Blitter wonders where Julian Rignall gets the money to put into slot machines with all those teddy bears to feed.

*

But there is no time for romance in the big bad world of software. The shops are not happy. Apparently you lot have been soaking up the sun, playing tennis, watching the Aussies slaughter England in the Test Series...and not buying any games. One big distributor is so naffed off with the summer slump that he's considering closing down next summer for two months like the French. Blitter wholeheartedly supports this proposal. It would be great. Gary Williams could play with his Game Boy, Steve Cooke could repair to his Cornish hovel to meditate, and the Blitter...?

Stand by next month for an in-depth report about piracy in Trinidad and Tobago.

*

Interesting facts department: importation of computers by individuals to the Soviet Union has shot up in the last two years, thanks to the relaxation of travel in and out of the country. The reaction from Soviet customs and excise, however, hasn't been long in coming. From the 15th August, new duties have been applied to the importation (all greatcoats to be removed while passing through customs) of various Spectrums, C64's etc. You will now have to pay 5000 roubles per machine (about £1000). You have been warned, comrade...

*

Meanwhile back in the decadent West, jet setter Jerry Hall has joined ACE as Dep Ad Manager...Jerry Hall from Biggleswade, that is. He's a perky fellow, but his legs just aren't in the same league...

Blit-blit!

OOPS!

Well, what can we say? Last month saw the worst oopsie we've ever had the misfortune to suffer when the letters pages turned out to have been checked by a dyslexic Martian with a bugged word-check program and terminal myopia. We mean the Editor, of course...

Meanwhile, we absolutely guarantee that this month's issue is errer free.

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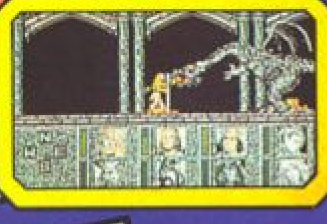

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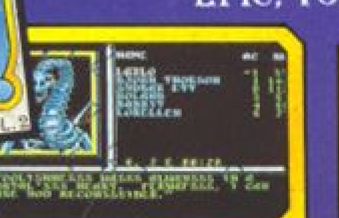

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